new masses

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ARAGON: TO ALL WRITERS OF ALL LANDS

Now, now is the time to declare your side so that there may be peace, peace which you can force men to make, and which you must force men to make today, and not tomorrow. *Whose side are you on?*

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

THE FLIGHT OF RUTH McKENNEY AND BRUCE MINTON By THE EDITORS

BEHIND THE WALLACE FURORE By A. B. MAGIL

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just a minute

WHEN the American armies occupied China last year, they gave as their pretext for this act the disarming of the Japanese. This excuse had a familiar ring, and if you had read the *Great Conspiracy Against Russia* by Michael Sayers and Albert Kahn, you would have discovered that the Allied armies gave as their reason for the invasion of the new Soviet state in 1918-19 the disarming of the Germans. Thus you will find in the *Great Conspiracy* the roots and reasons of the present-day "get-tough-with-Russia" policy. That is why NM's forthcoming "Adventure Dramatic," headed by Paul Robeson and Paul Draper (see back page), is more than just a dramatic presentation. It is a visual and aural record of imperialism at work. Friend Churchill was one of the prime provocateurs against the Soviet Union after the last war, and as late as 1930 the British were attempting to stir up the Asiatic tribes within the Soviet borders to rebel against their socialist government. Today Winnie is back again, louder and "tougher" than ever. Instead of David Francis, our big business ambassador to Russia in the last war, we have many busy representatives of Anglo-American imperialism working furiously to bring about a war with the Soviet Union.

The need for dramatizing this drive is indeed being appreciated universally. The Unity Theater of London, having read of the forthcoming production, has cabled NM for a copy of the script, as has a theater group of Toronto. The Canadian group, living in a community that has been well splattered by the spy-scare stories, has asked us to rush the script as quickly as possible.

If you want to clarify your friends who are bewildered by the seemingly inexplicable about-face of the American and British "statesmen" toward the Soviet Union, get them some tickets for our Living Newspaper theater lesson, while we still have some.

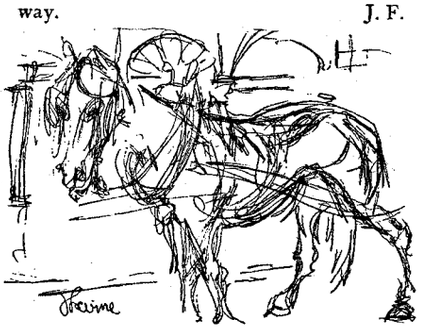
OUR ten-series forum on American Civilization (details on page 13) is rapidly taking shape. Lecturers thus far include Dr. Harry F. Ward, Dr. Samuel Sillen, Doxie Wilkerson and James Allen. By the time the roster of speakers is complete, there will be an authority on every phase of American contemporary civilization. For an objective view of the times we live in, this series will be hard to beat. The cost to non-NM subscribers is ten dollars for the series, for the subscriber, $6.50. If you wish to become an NM subscriber at any time during the series (on an annual basis, of course), the cost of the series will revert to $6.50.

OUR favorite organization, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, notify us that they will hold their first post-war national convention on September 21 and 22. The convention will be featured by a parade, bands and all, in honor of the dead of the Spanish anti-Franco war and World War II. The line of march is tentatively fixed as beginning at Madison Square Park and ending at the Fraternal Clubhouse on West 48th Street, where the convention proper will take place.

HAVE you got some good ideas for cartoons? If so, send them in. NM will pay you a dollar for each one used.

THE smallness of this issue is due, as you have probably surmised, to a paper shortage resulting from the refusal of the employers to grant the demands of the striking truck drivers. The N. Y. *Times* and other bourgeois papers, cut to less than half their usual size, have been grumbling over the "economic waste" caused by strikes. However, NM will gladly give up sixteen pages for as long as it takes to win the strike, and we are sure you feel the same way.

J. F.



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A MAN STANDING UP

It is ten years since Maxim Gorky's death. He was "like a great tree that lets fall its shadow on your shoulders."

By LOUIS ARAGON

TEN years he has been dead. It is ten years since the alarming telegram brought me hurrying from London. I was finishing *Les Beaux Quartiers* on board the boat which brought me—a boat unlike any other I had ever traveled on, filled with singing, dancing and matey-ness. Gorky's own people, the people he sprang from, the people that fills his great land-sized works, led us to him across the North Sea and the Baltic at his dying hour. The sea and the music bore us on through the long soft nights which obliterate class distinctions, us and our anxiety to see him again in his life, the great legendary man. Gorky it had been who first set Elsa writing, and as for me. . . .

This is a sort of confession I am making, which I never made before. In the literary sense of the word, Gorky never influenced me; it was my life he influenced, which is different and more serious. He stood over me, high over me, like a great tree that lets fall its shadow on your shoulders. I stood and meditated a very long time in that shadow. There was a quality about Gorky the writer which I could never attain to, something that cannot be imitated, the quality that gave him in his own lifetime the character of a legendary hero—his profound and perfect one-ness with his people. No other nation in the world, wherever I might turn, was privileged thus to see rising from it a man of its own stature, a man like Gorky standing up out of Russia, holding together in his big bony old-man's hands the past and the future, the long story of the centuries and the youngest hopes of life. He hauled with him into the march of history the whole old world of Russian literature, the world and people of the old ballads. He embraced them and surpassed them. It was an extraordinary world, rather like the bizarre following of clients (in the Latin sense) which gathered round him in Capri or Berlin, and was even reforming around him in the young-eyed Republic. There were figures so extravagantly romantic that it seemed Gorky had collected them for their oddity only; we were to see all too soon what a price his curiosity cost him. He embraced this world and surpassed it. We should be wrong to stand staring at its Russian picturesqueness; for are we not now, as Gorky was then, surrounded by a world of survivals, squawking, discussing, hanging in the void, and totally unaware that its feet have long since left the ground of reality? But I am wandering from my subject. I was on the brink of a confession.

The world I belonged to when I met Gorky for the first time was in a state of flux; it was a world of superstitions, a world of clouds, torn between the fetishism of taste and the call of humanity. I had already chosen my side but I was still a prey to that terror my friend Jean Paulhan writes of, which held back the authors of my generation from writing novels. In our artificial climate, in Paris where already the first fascist plots were brewing, it was fashionable to believe that one could not write a novel without being false to one's human destiny. We feared novelizing as our forefathers feared the heavens would fall. I am not writing the history of our sillinesses here. But what I want to emphasize is how much I was affected, not only by Gorky's novels themselves, but by their having been written by *this* man, this peerless figure, this patriarch on the threshold of the new world, Gorky: this it was that beat down in me the inhibitions which we all carried. I called my second novel, the one I finished on the boat between London and Leningrad, *Les Beaux Quartiers* (Residential Quarter), and I am certain that the name was an inverted echo of *The Lower Depths*. That will seem a niggling sort of detail, but influence is a curious thing; it is not always the direct and visible influence which has the strongest effect.

In 1934 too, at the Congress of Soviet Writers, I had been struck by Gorky's preoccupation, which I thought untimely, with Russian medieval poetry, the bylins, the heroes of the epics, the Bogatyrs who resemble the Knights of the Round Table and differ from them as the Pripet differs from Tintagel. He had a sense of the national in poetry, of the inherited treasures of experience from the remote national past, which ran clean counter to the false image we had of the Soviet man of letters. When some poet brought on to the stage a derisive caricature of the Bogatyrs, making them out to be grotesque and brutal feudal warriors, like a prefiguring of the SS, it was from Gorky that its opponents took their criticism, and drove the work off the stage as an insult to Russia. That incident made a strong impression on me, too, and provoked a train of thought which, though it did not follow Gorky's meditation very closely, borrowed its colors from Gorky. Those who know me, know how important this train of thought was for me, and how it brought me to certain French sources whose effect is a biographical fact, traceable in my works. The shadow of Gorky stretches even that far.

The ship that carried us down the Baltic was ringing with the songs of this Russian people, perhaps at the very instant when the most purely Russian of its writers was in his agony. Should we find him still alive? We asked the accordion-players in the bows and the balalaikas in the poop. It was a terrible gap his death would leave; it was a great authoritative voice that was dying. It was the voice which had arisen and asked: *"Skiem viy, mastieri Cultura?"* "Whose side are you on, you lords of culture?"

NO, WE were not to find him alive. In those last days of his life, sultry and thundery with the heat of June, we reached the gates of his dwelling, in the great park which the state had given him. We did not enter the house. All around the green garden, cars stood waiting like ours. Young men and girls passed on the dusty road, singing, dreaming, making love or joking aloud. From inside, where the race with death was being run, came contradictory news. The door opened for

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the doctor. Later, we knew: it was a sadder drama than the simple death we imagined. Now we know what weighed so heavily on our hearts in those last hours: among the baroque retinue which this lover of human diversity had assembled round himself, crime, the worst and blackest of crimes was at work—dark conspiracy, including the doctor and others on whom Gorky had heaped his generosity. Gorky died, and a great sob went up from the whole country. I saw him sleeping surrounded with flowers and weeping plants, the great old man who took so many secrets with him, secrets hard to discover, secrets with the tracks brushed away behind them: the secret of goodness; the secret of endless curiosity about people; the secret of patience; the secret of listening, as to a fountain, to the precious unconscious murmuring of a multitude of simple hearts. He was always a man who learned from others, and gave them back what he learnt.

Ten years ago. We are still under his shadow. It still is over us, aften ten years of history, ten of the most terrible years of this world. It is the shadow of an unanswered question that hangs over us—deaths, martyrdoms, horrible sufferings, sobs, crimes, all that horror and inhumanity can invent; and an unanswered question. . . .

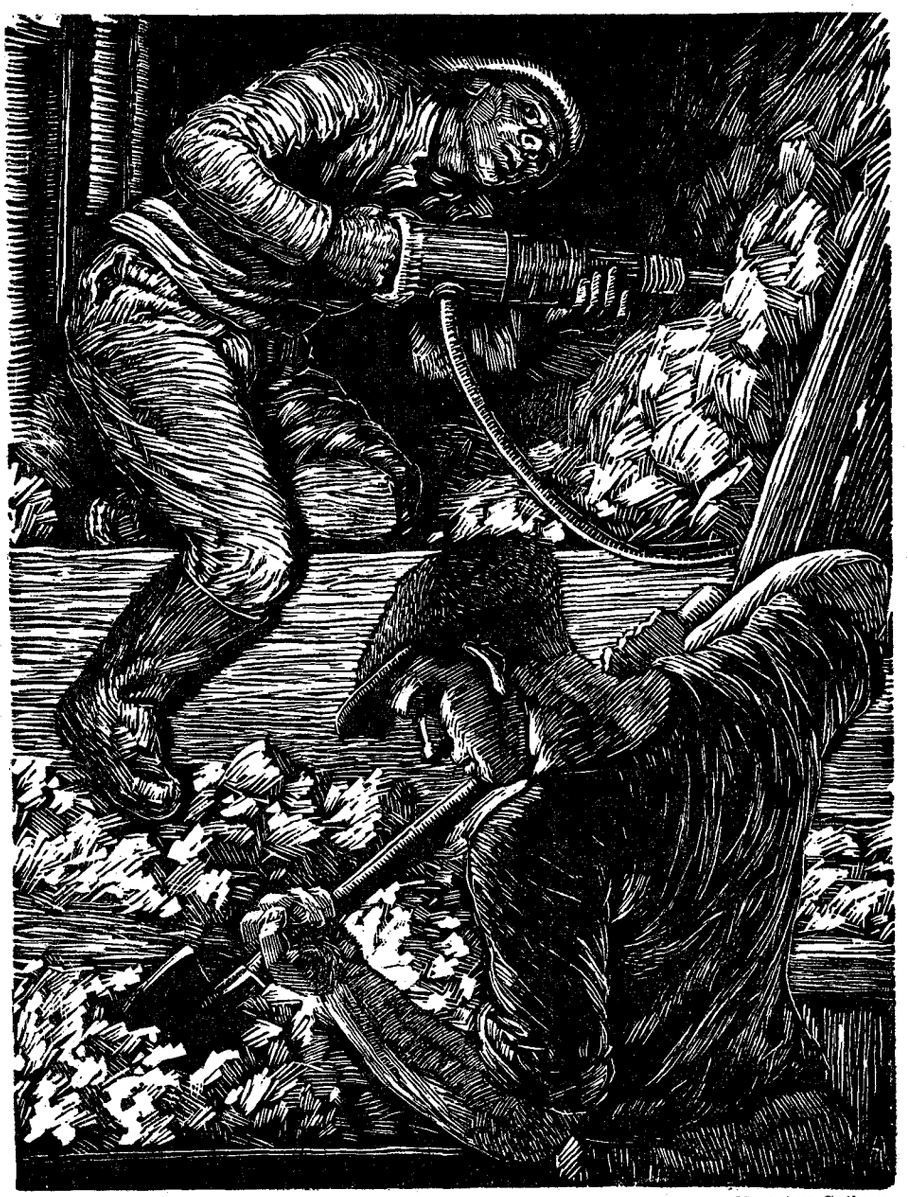
Whose side are you on, you lords of culture, when preferential treatment is given to the murderer and not the victim; when heroic nations which have barely survived massacre are treated by their false allies as enemies; when those to whom the radio spoke such honeyed words yesterday, see today the old enemy in a new uniform as your precious policemen, still leagued against the poor, still leagued against those who did not sell their souls or their anger, those who believed in you, those who prayed for your coming. . . . Where do you stand, whose side are you on, you lords of culture, that you are not heard in the hubbub of victory?

. . . You see how our means of killing, of extermination, of cataclysm, have grown to the size of natural catastrophes. They are out of hand, almost out of reach of our imaginations. The danger has never been so close before, of the destruction of all that makes life worth living, the extinction of the light of the eyes, the destruction of the breath of love. You have not been so long out of danger that you have forgotten what destruction means; you are still pale from the hell you lived in. There is no time to lose. There is no calculation to make. There is no balance to cast up between all and nothing. There is no comparison to draw between Man and the void. Whose side are you on?

When *he* asked you that, the old man who died before you answered, he could see what was coming. He was among his people who were going to suffer as none has ever suffered; he was there in the throng of seventeen million people marked for death, a forest of trees blazed for felling! And he asked you whose side you were on. Surrounded by the huge industry of peace, the Ukrainian wheatfields, the great hydro-electric schemes, the iron-foundries talking their fiery language to the future; surrounded by dreams that were coming true, at what a price! Surrounded by the immense and peaceful reverie of a people whose greatness shocked the daylight, he knew what would come, and he gave his great, bitter cry: "Whose side? Whose side are you on?"

I AM French. I speak from a little promontory of Europe which is great by the power of the human voice and by the courage of men and their obstinate hard work. I am French, and that is why I have a duty to peace which begins in Paris. From this dramatic position I shout to you what the dead man among his seventeen million dead can no longer shout: "Now, now is the time to declare your side, lords of culture, so that there may be peace, peace in the likeness of France, peace which you can force men to make, lords of culture, and which you must force men to make, today and not tomorrow. And not tomorrow! Come on, tell us: whose side are you on?"

(*Translated by John Manifold.*)



New-Age Gallery.

"Drilling (Moscow)," linecut by Albert Abramovitz.

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THE MINTON-McKENNEY FLIGHT

By THE EDITORS

MANY readers of NEW MASSES were no doubt surprised to learn that Bruce Minton and Ruth McKenney had been expelled from the Communist Party. It is always sad to discover that those who have been thought to be staunch in the battle against human enslavement and degradation have proved weak and unworthy. To the editors of NEW MASSES, however, who were associated with Miss McKenney and Mr. Minton for more than ten years, this news has not been entirely unexpected. Our own experiences with these two writers, who are husband and wife, forced us to conclude months ago that they were moving toward a break with the Marxist movement. That break has come. In its statement on the expulsion the Connecticut State Committee of the Communist Party points out that Mr. Minton and Miss McKenney, following the recent meeting of the Party's National Committee, issued an anti-Party document "attacking the basic line of the Party and slandering its leadership, and circulated this document outside of Connecticut." The statement also characterized their position as "petty-bourgeois 'radicalism'" and charged that they "were in contact with anti-Party forces" outside their own branch.

NM's own relations with Mr. Minton and Miss McKenney came to an end five months ago when, beginning with our April 23 issue, we dropped them from our board of contributing editors. We took this action because over a period of months they had directed against NEW MASSES and its editors the same kind of destructive, factional attacks which they later launched against the Communist Party and its leadership. Nevertheless, we refrained from making public our differences in the hope that the passing of time and the grave national and international problems confronting the American people and its working-class party would cause Mr. Minton and Miss McKenney to abandon their puerile "leftism" and place the fight for peace, democracy and socialism above personal pique and petty individualism. Instead, they merely broadened their mud-slinging to include the Communist Party and developed their pseudo-radical posturing into an approach to domestic and foreign affairs which is in direct conflict with that of Marxists in this and other countries. Since the facts in the case are revealing and the issues have a significance beyond the activities of these two individuals, we want our readers to understand what has happened.

On August 29, 1945 there arrived in our office a letter, signed by Ruth McKenney and Bruce Minton, which stated that "in view of our continuing objections to the reformist editorial policy pursued by the present editorial board of the magazine," they were resigning as contributing editors. The letter also requested that the resignation be announced in the forthcoming issue.

This resignation came without warning. The "continuing objections to the reformist editorial policy" was news to us. On the contrary, only a few months earlier Mr. Minton had written letters expressing the greatest warmth toward NEW MASSES and toward the editors personally.

Instead of joining with the editors, contributors and readers of NEW MASSES in the effort to correct the serious errors which the magazine had made, Mr. Minton and Miss McKenney set themselves up as arbiters of Marxism and from their pinnacle of purity poured down abuse and calumny.

Mr. Minton claimed that he and Miss McKenney had disagreed from the beginning with the position of Earl Browder, former head of the American Communist Party, whose policies were castigated by Jacques Duclos, French Communist leader, as a "notorious revision of Marxism." Even if true, this would not justify their later arrogance and disruption. We might add that rejection of error is not always synonymous with embracing of truth. Moreover, in a letter from San Francisco, dated May 19, 1945, Mr. Minton wrote: "I leave here optimistic and buoyed up. There are rough times ahead, very rough, but I have more confidence than ever in the correctness of our [that is, the Communist movement's] basic position, which has survived the test of very stringent events." *This was written five days before the publication of the Duclos article.*

MR. MINTON and Miss McKenney knew of course that their statement of resignation, which they insisted be published, would be picked up by the commercial press and used against NM and the entire Marxist movement. That, after so many years of association and in a time of crisis, they could take such a drastic, highly individualistic step indicated to us that there was more in the matter than met the eye. Nevertheless, the editors of NM held their tempers and sought to dissuade them from an act that would prove damaging to much more than NEW MASSES. To our efforts to arrange a conference Mr. Minton replied coldly and abusively. It soon became clear to us that the attack on NEW MASSES was only a pretext, that the real quarrel of Mr. Minton and Miss McKenney was with the Communist Party of the United States.

A second letter, dated August 31, 1945, also revealed something about the motivation of the attack. ". . . Because we have both some stake in this," Mr. Minton wrote, "we do insist on our resignation. Ruth has a reputation to keep clean, I feel, and I insist for her future writing that she finally end her association with a magazine that can only harm her standing intellectually." In what circles could her association with a Marxist magazine "harm her standing intellectually"? Mr. Minton didn't specify, but we leave it to our readers to draw their own conclusions. Only shortly before, Mr. Minton and Miss McKenney had evidently felt differently on that subject. "Your approval of her [Miss McKenney's] two pieces has meant a great deal to her," wrote Mr. Minton from San Francisco on April 8, 1945. "She has not written anything she has considered of any integrity since she left Washington, that is for publication, and the fact that you liked what she did was an immense shot in the arm and gave her the reassurance she needed for quite a time."

In another letter, dated Sept. 12, 1945, Mr. Minton demanded the im-

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mediate resignation of the entire NM staff. At this point we realized that discussion would be fruitless since we were no longer dealing with colleagues in a common cause, but with rabid factionalists whose criticism was aimed at destroying rather than improving NEW MASSES.

In later months Mr. Minton decided it would be expedient to retreat a bit. He expressed a desire to write for NM and offered us for publication a speech by Miss McKenney. However, since he continued to characterize NEW MASSES as revisionist and reformist, we decided there was no basis for collaboration. When last April we introduced changes in the magazine and recast our board of contributing editors, we eliminated the names of Bruce Minton and Ruth McKenney.

MORE important than these details are the political issues involved. Let no one be seduced by the commercial press canard that the expulsion of these two individuals is evidence of "intolerance" and suppression of freedom of criticism. No member of the Communist Party is prevented from making criticism or expressing differences of opinion. The constitution of the Communist Party of the USA specifically provides that members have "not only the right but the responsibility to participate in the making of policies and in the election of its leading committees." It also provides that decisions shall be by majority vote, after which "all members are duty-bound to carry out such decisions." It is Mr. Minton and Miss McKenney who are guilty of anti-democratic efforts to nullify the will of the majority. It is preposterous to speak of their intemperate diatribes and attempts to undermine Marxist institutions as criticism. The fact is that even non-Marxist organizations would not tolerate such venomous factionalism—a factionalism that helps only the enemies of the labor and progressive cause.

Ultra-leftism is not a new phenomenon in the American or international working-class movements. From the Eighties of the last century, when Frederick Engels criticized the sectarian "purity" of the early American Marxists, through the Socialist Labor Party, the IWW, the left wing of the Socialist Party and the first years of the Communist Party, ultra-left tendencies plagued the efforts to build an American movement for socialism. Internationally the situation became serious enough to cause Lenin in 1920 to write his famous brochure, *"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. Stating that the principal enemy of the working class is right-wing opportunism, Lenin in this work also pointed out: "It is not yet sufficiently known abroad that Bolshevism grew, took shape and became steeled in long years of struggle against *petty-bourgeois revolutionism*, which smacks of, or borrows something from, anarchism, and which differs in all essentials from the conditions and requirements of the sustained proletarian class struggle. For Marxists it is well established theoretically—and the experience of all European revolutions and revolutionary movements has fully confirmed it—that the small proprietor . . . who under capitalism suffers constant oppression and very often an incredibly sharp and rapid worsening of conditions of life and even ruin, easily becomes extremely revolutionary, but is incapable of displaying perseverance, ability to organize, discipline and firmness." Elsewhere Lenin wrote that ultra-left is merely the obverse of the right-wing trend, both stemming from the same social roots.

This early ultra-leftism expressed the growing pains of the Marxist movement when it inevitably stumbled as part of the process of learning to walk. But that which in a child is part of healthful, if complex, progress, in a mature person becomes dangerous retrogression. That is why William Z. Foster, chairman of the Communist Party, who from the outset opposed Browder's bourgeois liberal fantasies, after the ousting of Browder, while stressing the fight against right opportunism, persistently warned against swinging to the opposite—only apparently opposite—extreme, ultra-left sectarianism. There were some who refused to heed these warnings. They attempted to live out their day-dreams, to leap over the real problems of the present-day struggle against capitalist reaction into a more advanced, more "militant" stage. Such pseudo-revolutionary escapism merely serves to leave the forces of reaction unchallenged masters of the immediate situation and therefore of the future too.

It should be noted that intellectuals, because of their social origin and their functional role under capitalism, are peculiarly susceptible to such moods, especially in periods of difficulty. There are of course in the Communist movement in this and other countries many intellectuals of another type, men and women who have genuinely assimilated the Marxist outlook, have identified themselves with the working class as the only revolutionary class and have converted their talents and training into important assets in the battle for pro-

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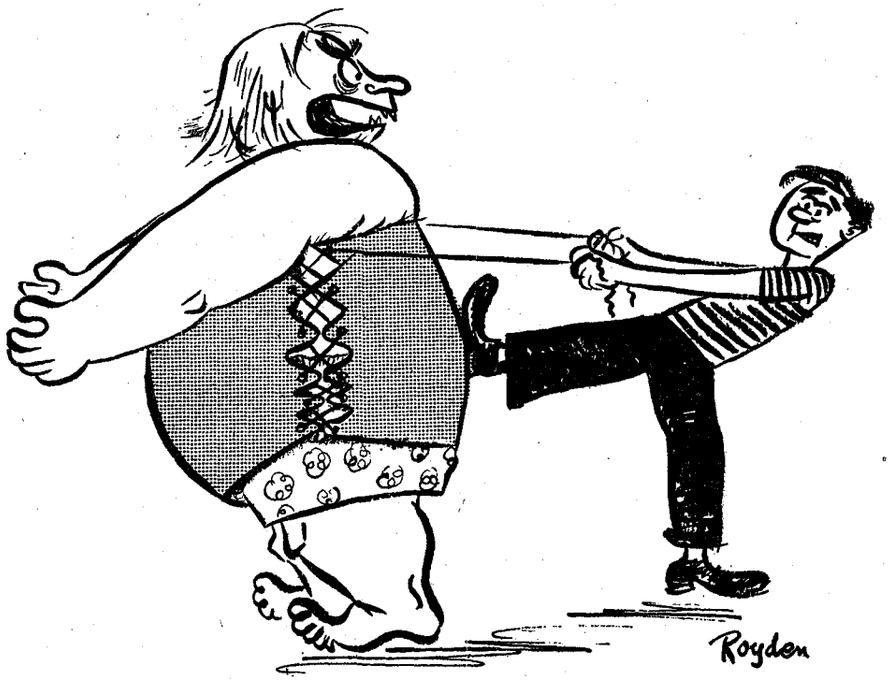

"Tighter, boy, tighter—I've got to deliver an inflation speech tonight."

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gress and socialism. Unfortunately, Mr. Minton and Miss McKenney, valuable as their work was in certain periods, were more consistent in their wavering than in their Marxism and were all too often addicted to "petty-bourgeois revolutionism." This is evident in Miss McKenney's novel, *Jake Home*, which for all its virtues suffers both artistically and as social history from its hothouse approach to the American class struggle and its typically middle-class conception of Communist activity as the work of a few master-minds manipulating the masses. Such weaknesses were also evident in Mr. Minton on various occasions, notably in 1942 when as Washington correspondent of NM he opposed the policy of national unity pursued by Marxists throughout the world, a unity embracing all, including capitalist elements, who sought victory over the Axis. In a series of articles he wrote, which the editors of NM rejected in their original form, he attempted to narrow this policy and to develop an approach which would have divided the anti-Axis forces and disrupted the war effort.

ALL this would not be worth recalling were it not for the fact that these sporadic "leftist" tendencies have now grown into a factional monstrosity which has nothing in common with Marxism. Concretely, what is the position of Mr. Minton and Miss McKenney on the urgent questions before the American people? In the document they are circulating they attack William Z. Foster for stating in his report to the meeting of the Communist National Committee: "The most important of all questions is the fight to maintain world peace." They insist that "there is no peace" to maintain, that the civil war in China is already an international war, and that the diplomatic war being waged by the United States against the Soviet Union and all democratic governments is tantamount to military war. Sounds very radical, doesn't it? But stop to think: wouldn't the American imperialists like nothing better than to have our people accept the notion that the fight for peace is already lost? That would relieve them of all homefront opposition to their war plans. The Minton-McKenney line on foreign affairs *means in effect abandonment of the struggle against World War III.*

There is the same berserk "leftism"

"What black magician conjures up this fiend . . .?"
—Richard III.

on domestic policy. The document denounces as Browderism the use of the term "progressives," describes all reference to "pro-Roosevelt forces" as "reformist illusion," and demands the formation of "a class-conscious Labor Party." Let us consider what this means. In the 1946 election the American people are not voting on the issue of socialism, even though socialism is the historic perspective of the working-class. What they are voting on through the candidates they elect and through the political movements they support or fail to support are such issues as co-operation for peace with the USSR, the ending of American intervention in China and the reactionary policies in Europe, Asia and Latin America, the eradication of all fascist vestiges; higher wages, firm price control, a vast housing program, expanded social security, curbs on monopoly and on big business profits, the outlawing of the poll-tax and lynching, etc.—all of them issues whose outcome will not only immediately affect the lives of the people of America and the world, but will advance or retard the struggle for socialism.

It is evident that the achievement of such a program or any reasonable facsimile thereof in the 1946 election requires in the first place a politically alert labor movement, acting independently to bring its maximum strength to bear behind these issues. Second, it requires the mobilization as labor's allies of those sections of the population—the dirt farmers, small business and professional people, Negroes and veterans—who likewise suffer from big business control of our economy and government. Third, it requires the enlisting of allies wherever else they can be found, no matter how temporary, limited and vacillating they may be. Finally, it requires the concentration of the maximum power of such a coalition against those candidates and policies behind which the forces of reaction are concentrated.

Concretely, this means strengthening the independent efforts of the CIO Political Action Committee and of allied and potentially allied groups such as the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions, the National Citizens PAC, farm, Negro, veterans' and other progressive groups, including the Communists. It means the building of the Marxist vanguard, the Communist Party. It means recognizing that the Republican Party nationally remains the principal party of big business reaction while at the same time the Truman administration, as Eugene Dennis, general secretary of the Communist Party, pointed out in his report at the recent National Committee meeting, "is zealously carrying out the program

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of big business in both foreign and domestic affairs," though at the same time it is "still sensitive to certain mass pressures," is "still influenced by the conflicting trends, groups and opinions within the Democratic Party." These conflicts within the Democratic Party (to some extent within the GOP too) make it "essential that—while pursuing an independent working class policy and expanding its independent political organizations and activity—labor helps influence a progressive regrouping within the Democratic Party" and "achieve a working agreement" with the pro-Roosevelt elements.

It should be obvious that a coalition of this kind, broadly conceived, cannot in 1946 be predicated on an organizational break with the two major parties, but rather on a *political break with the policies of the dominant leadership of those parties.* Such a political break, moreover, is the indispensable ploughing of the soil out of which can rise in the post-election period a new people's anti-monopoly party led by labor. This year, however, most of the candidates supported by the coalition are Democrats with a sprinkling of progressive Republicans. At the same time, wherever the situation requires it and wherever it will strengthen the battle against reaction, Communist or other independent candidates are being put forward. The aim must at all times be, in the words of Dennis, "consolidating the unity of action of the broadest coalition of all democratic forces in the 1946 elections to prevent a reactionary Republican victory, which now looms as a distinct possibility, as well as to defeat the reactionaries and allies of the GOP in the Democratic Party." And looking beyond November, "the situation demands that broad political support for a new people's party be organized."

All this is the opposite pole of Browderism which, far from combatting monopoly capital and its reactionary program, depicted it as "progressive" and sought to make labor the submissive handyman of big business and the Truman administration.

All this is also the opposite pole of what Mr. Minton and Miss McKenney demand. A "class-conscious Labor Party" at this time would exclude most of the CIO and AFL, let alone middle-class elements. If this phrase has any meaning, it can only be synonymous with the Communist Party. The fact is the majority of trade union members are not even ready to establish an independent party with a more limited outlook. Simultaneously, Mr. Minton and Miss McKenney spurn alliances with progressives in the two capitalist parties. What they advocate is the self-isolation of the most advanced workers and the disruption of the movement for independent political action. Under cover of radical rhetoric, they propose to atomize the political opposition to reactionary big business.

Thus, by different roads both Browder and the ultra-leftists arrive at the same destination: *abandonment of the struggle against the foreign and domestic policies of monopoly capital and its GOP and tory Democratic servitors.*

There is a fitting epilogue to all this super-revolutionary sound and fury. Mr. Minton and Miss McKenney are planning to leave for France for a prolonged stay. The former has told friends that the victory of fascism is inevitable in this country, that the crackdown will soon come, and that he considers it his duty to leave and urges others to do likewise in order to preserve the revolutionary forces for the future. The circle is completed. They began by deserting first NEW MASSES and then the Communist Party; they end by deserting the struggle against reaction, fascism and war.

●

L'ANONYME

And you are larger than the famed,
And dearer than the legend
Mourned with circumstance.

Sweet comrade,
Fallen also upon Mount Valerien
Where sing the morrows of Peri,
I cannot hold thee less
Who walked without acclaim
And died as purely.

In the day
When mourning was of triumph
And of tribute,
It is written
That the petals wept upon the noblest.
Comrade,
There are sorrows unrecorded,
Silences that bear no name.

I have thought
That in the time of testing,
If the grail of martyrdom is here,
It filters not from testament of heroes
Chanting to the rifle,
But from veins as simple and as pure as these
That opened wordlessly
And are not known.

JULES ALAN WEIN.

portside patter

by BILL RICHARDS

Officials state that American aid to the Kuomintang consists only of surplus material. People are probably wondering just when the Marines were declared surplus.

●

Upton Close has proposed New Guinea as a Jewish homeland. It's almost as hot there as the place Close has been told to go.

●

President Truman takes his morning exercise at the regulation Army pace of 120 steps a minute. Some quarters see this as a sign that Truman will not choose to run.

●

Several American warships stopped off at Greece on their Mediterranean tour. The visit was described as a "courtesy" call, although the Greeks may have a word for it too.

●

The Bulgarian people have voted overwhelmingly against the monarchy. Obviously the issues in the plebiscite weren't Greek to them.

●

A Hearst columnist reports that "a chunk of Communist propaganda" was found hidden in the dialogue of *Forever Amber.* Hearst has evidently not discovered it but the heroine also favored unions.

●

Senator Vandenburg has vehemently denied ever taking orders from Gerald L. K. Smith. He merely gives that impression occasionally.

●

Virtual civil war rages in the Philippines. After only a few months of independence the country is going on the Roxas.

●

Foreign theaters, at least, got a chance to see Jane Russell in "The Outlaw." The rest of the world will probably never see a better example of American expansion.

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THE GERMANY BYRNES WANTS

An Editorial by JOHN STUART

THE most biting and revealing commentary on Secretary Byrnes' Stuttgart speech came, it seems to me, in a brief news dispatch to the New York *Herald Tribune* of September 12. Like a lightning flash across stormy heavens, this cable from Frankfurt illuminates clearly what Byrnes is doing and whom it benefits most. As a result of his speech, says the report, "industrial stocks on the Frankfurt Exchange have risen an average of ten percent while bank stocks have risen as much as thirty percent. . . . This price rise is symptomatic of a growing optimism among German industrialists and financiers. . . . Even the outlawed *Vereinigte Stahlwerke* shares [among the most powerful steel cartels in the world] still quoted, recovered from 80 to 101. . . . They [the German industrialists] believe that America and Britain have definitely decided to build up western Germany as a balance against the Russian zone."

In itself, the ringing of bells on the Frankfurt Exchange is sufficient judgment of Byrnes' speech—a blistering condemnation of American political operations in Germany. But there is more. For although many American newspapers persist in making comparisons, in Byrnes' favor of course, between his declaration of policy and Molotov's statements on Germany of last July, these newspapers cannot present a shred of evidence that after Molotov spoke Hitler's financiers cheered. The difference in the response of German imperialists to Byrnes and to Molotov is a difference which contains the largest meaning for the future of world peace as much as it does for the future of Germany.

American policy in Germany is, of course, a geographical application of a fundamental policy that runs beyond that area. One cannot believe that the Truman administration means to destroy the roots of German aggression, to denazify and democratize, when in China it supports with dollars and arms a Chinese version of Nazism. It taxes common sense to believe that Byrnes with the aid of Vandenberg will cleanse Germany, when in Greece they support the same classes which brought Germany to catastrophe. It is beyond credibility that Byrnes can wave the banner of democracy in Germany when in Spain he recognizes the flag of Franco fascism. All of Byrnes' Aesopian words on Germany cannot wipe away these facts, and when Byrnes speaks of democracy, the *Deutsche Herren* know exactly what he means. Thus, the "growing optimism among German industrialists and financiers."

Toward the close of his speech Byrnes remarked that "all that the Allied governments can and should do is lay down the rules under which Germany can govern itself." This is a fantastic definition of America's function as a victory power.

If the State Department restricts its function to "laying down rules"—if that is how it visualizes its task—then one can legitimately ask why we did not retain Admiral Doenitz, who would have happily followed the rules. Our task as an occupying force was unmistakably defined in the Potsdam agreement which Byrnes perverts both in spirit and in fact. The whole agreement was predicated, as any careful reading of it shows, on the *economic extirpation of fascism* and its *war potential* as the indispensable condition for the reconstruction of German political life. The gist of Potsdam, in addition, was that economic unification of Germany was a step dependent on the *destruction* of the German *monopolies* and *cartels*. All this is what the Soviets have been doing in their zone. But if by the test of Potsdam one is to judge American accomplishment in its zone, then we must conclude that the State Department has deliberately allowed the cart to pull the horse, and therefore has intentionally gotten nowhere. The American approach has been to return political power to reactionary Germans—and Byrnes now seeks to expand that transference of government on a nationwide scale—before economic cleansing. Raymond Daniell, in commenting on the Stuttgart speech in the New York *Times* of September 8, wrote that "the risk of a revival of a militant nationalism [read fascism and reaction] is inherent in Mr. Byrnes' proposal for the immediate establishment of a central German agency of government to draft a constitution for a federated democratic state."

NOT only is American imperialism advocating through Byrnes a prompt return of political power to the rabid nationalists and adherents of the Nazi program, as in Bavaria, but it is preparing the economic groundwork for their strengthening. To my mind what Byrnes had to say on reparations indicates this clearly. At the present moment an effort is being made by the United States to revise out of existence the reparations principle as embodied in the Potsdam accord. For several months the Americans have failed to deliver, as they are committed to, reparations to the Russians. And on August 15 Byrnes noted that "reparations deliveries . . . take valuable assets from the impoverished lands and necessarily slow down their recovery." Germany, which raped and plundered the entire Continent, suddenly finds itself tenderly referred to as an "impoverished land" while the victims of the Wehrmacht are tacitly portrayed as economic aggressors. This is not to say that the industry of enemy countries should not be revived for peaceful purposes; but it is quite another thing to insist that reparations from them are unjust. Germany's recovery is important but the recovery of the allied nations which suffered most in the struggle against fascism is by any measure of justice paramount.

Why Byrnes in agreement with Bevin is opposed to the reparation agreement as outlined at Potsdam is not hard to fathom. They are opposed to the strengthening of the Eastern European states and in particular the USSR. They are opposed to reconstruction programs which do not invite the "help and guidance" of Wall Street and the City. Much more on changing Anglo-American attitudes toward reparations will become clear when the secret negotiations between Byrnes and Bevin find their expression in political steps.

In the interim the German gentry, who for a while thought they lost the war, are beginning to discover that perhaps they have not been defeated. One more speech such as Byrnes' and they will indeed march in victory parades.

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WASHINGTON MEMO By Virginia Gardner

THE Senate Campaign Expenditures Committee is looking for a staff of investigators to probe the Bilbo and McKellar campaigns. At least the Semite-conscious Robert Barker, former Dies snooper who conducted the committee's Montana hearings on the Burton K. Wheeler-Leif Erickson campaign, will not go. He is no longer with the committee. But for some reason he has been putting on a one-man campaign—unsuccessful, so far—to get the Montana hearings published.

The testimony, which establishes little except the anti-Semitism of Barker in his conduct of the hearing, includes some brief "questioning" of Senator Wheeler. The Senator managed to get into the record, in the event anyone was in doubt about it, that he was "proud of the fact the Communists are against me," that he thought it a "badge of honor." (The Senator was defeated in the primary by a liberal candidate, Leif Erickson, who faces stiff Republican opposition in November.)

The ineptness of Barker in trying to lug in Red-baiting makes for funny reading. A witness had said he was a "regular reader of the *Saturday Review of Literature*." He also read newspapers, it seems, and said, rather vaguely, that "they were gunning for him (Wheeler) in all the papers in New York, well, I would say the liberal papers. . . . Generally speaking, the *Herald Tribune*, New York *News* and *PM*."

This was apparently said in all sobriety, and Barker, hot on the scent of Reds, immediately questioned: "And the NEW MASSES?"

"All the broad, radical newspapers, I suppose," the witness replied.

Barker asked Erickson about Henry Hoke, author of *Blackmail* and *It's A Secret*, who freely discusses Senator Wheeler's defense of some of the alleged seditionists when they were on trial. Did Erickson know whether Hoke was a member of the National Citizens Political Action Committee? No. Did he know whether he was connected with the Anti-Defamation League? No. Did he know what Sidney Hillman's connection (this was before his death) was with the National Citizens Political Action Committee? This apparently was too much for Erickson, who replied with a question. "Are you testifying?" he asked his questioner. Then Erickson went on to say that Senator Wheeler had made the statement that the PAC was spending $200,000 to defeat him. But, said Erickson ruefully, his campaign never got it.

When Wheeler's defense of the seditionists was alluded to, Barker said, defensively, albeit a little bumbingly, "That sedition trial in Washington was also participated in by many members of the Senate including Taft of Ohio, was it not?"

Erickson replied: "I would class Senator Taft of Ohio and Senator Wheeler together. They usually vote together."

The principal anti-Semitism was revealed in a long memorandum Barker introduced through George E. Cooper, a District of Columbia Red Squad policeman he borrowed and took along to help in his investigating.

Not only did Barker borrow two DC cops, but he put to work two New York City policemen, W. T. Parry and William Kip. I have since learned that Barker hired them himself and paid their expenses, and the committee refused to allow him funds, so that they came out of his pocket. Barker himself reportedly was hired on Senator Wheeler's suggestion, and Sen. Edwin C. Johnson, who has since retired from the committee in a huff, told me that Barker conferred with Wheeler when he went to Montana. "But he had not been instructed to, and he had not been told to bring in PAC," said Senator Johnson.

The memorandum read was based

on information they supplied about persons he asked to have investigated in New York, one of whom sent $1,000 to Sen. James E. Murray, who contributed $1,000 to the Erickson campaign fund, said Barker. Each name in the memo was followed with the comment that the individual was Jewish.

"He is wealthy and Jewish and is chairman of the Advisory Board of the Anti-Defamation League. . . ." ". . . are Jewish and live at 29 Beekman place," it says of Albert D. Lasker and wife. They also endorsed presidential electors for Communist candidates, it said. Another name: ". . . also Jewish . . . is wealthy, according to his own statement."

RECENTLY I called the clerk of a committee for some information.

"I can't hear you, Miss Gardner, there seems to be some interference on the line," he said. "Suppose you call me back," and he gave me another number. "No, it's the same," he said when I again reached him. "It's on your end of the line."

He ought to know. I was talking to John Carrington of the Un-American Activities Committee staff.

PASSAGE of the Full Employment Act of 1946 even in its extremely innocuous form often is alluded to as one of the achievements of the do-nothing 79th Congress. Yet for months after its passage the President failed to appoint anyone to administer it. A council was to be set up which was to recommend ways to maintain maximum employment and avoid depressions. How conservative these recommendations are apt to be under the three-man Council of Economic Advisers Mr. Truman finally named is suggested by some recently published testimony of the chairman, Edwin G. Nourse, vice president of the conservative Brookings Institution. The testimony was part of the hearings before the Agriculture and Mining Subcommittee of the Colmer Postwar Economic Policy Committee, withheld for publication until August 6 last, when the committee report was issued. Here we see Dr. Nourse (May 24, 1945) confiding in the subcommittee, after outlining his ideas and describing himself as "something more

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than a mere trade-union agricultural economist":

"I recall some years ago talking somewhat along this line to a *Farmers' Week* audience and Radio Town Meeting at the University of Ohio. As we left the platform, Mordecai Ezekiel, who had been the other speaker, said to me, 'I hadn't realized how much of an advocate of laissez faire you are.'

"I protested then and want to protest most strongly now that what I am talking is not laissez faire at all but simply a common-sense recognition that piling up mutually offsetting privileges and restraints makes government a burdensome complication of economic life. . . ." He was, he said, for "the American way of life" and free enterprise, and he saw no reason why rising productivity should mean "higher rates of profit or higher rates of wages." And above all he was for "free bargaining in an open market."

Behind the Wallace Furore

ONE of the penalties of being a weekly magazine, particularly one that operates under handicaps such as don't afflict commercial publications, is that important events have a way of ignoring deadlines. That is why we'll have to content ourselves in this issue with only brief comment on the Wallace-Truman-Byrnes political tornado.

Two things stand out amid the fury of controversy. First, Secretary of Commerce Wallace's speech last week, despite serious shortcomings, was a criticism of the reactionary Byrnes-Vandenberg foreign policy and revealed a cleavage in the cabinet on the whole get-tough-with-Russia line at a time when Byrnes and Vandenberg were pressing this line in all directions at the Paris peace conference. Second, President Truman, after at first endorsing the Wallace speech as a vote-catching maneuver, did a shameless about-face and showed himself the willing prisoner and accomplice of the big business imperialists who are hell-bent on global domination and World War III.

The core of Wallace's address was its attack on the policy of Anglo-American alliance directed against the Soviet Union and the new people's democracies of eastern Europe. The fact that he placed the onus for this policy on London rather than on Washington, that he conceived of cooperative relations with Russia in terms of adjusting spheres of influence rather than of collaboration in the struggle to strengthen democracy against reaction and fascism—these and other shortcomings are secondary. On the main issues on which world peace depends, Wallace broke sharply with the GOP-tory democratic coalition that is in command of foreign affairs. And through Wallace there spoke the plain people of America—and undoubtedly certain more realistic businessmen too—who had supported the FDR policy of Big Three unity and today are deeply perturbed by the reckless course of those who have betrayed the Roosevelt heritage.

The consternation in the American delegation at Paris, the loud cries of pain from Senators Vandenberg and Connally, from Senator Taft and Rep. E. E. Cox of Georgia, from the millionaire press, are a measure of the power of the Wallace blow. It has shaken up the seats of the mighty, disoriented, temporarily at least, their strategy, laid bare the deep rifts in the vaunted bipartisan unity on foreign affairs, and given dramatic emphasis to the central issue in the 1946 election. Like the recent stock market break, the conflict over foreign policy is one more intimation that American imperialism, which is trying to bully every nation, including its own, into submission, is in reality a sick giant.

Let the people follow up Wallace's attack, follow up the even clearer assault of Senator Pepper against a policy that is leading our country to disaster. This is the time to build the peace front, for the November election and after. This is the time to tell the Munich-men, the capitalist gamblers with life and death, that it is we the people, passionately seeking peace and a democratic world, who shall not be moved.

—A. B. MAGIL.

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HECHT ON HORSEBACK

"A Flag is Born" undermines morale. It adds to the welter of confusion on an issue deeply in need of clarity and sanity.

By MOSES MILLER

IN 1940, the Emergency Council for Zionist Affairs, representing all of the major Zionist organizations of America, published a pamphlet attacking the Revisionists (the extreme right wing group in the Zionist movement) and their front organizations. It stated: "Psychologically the moment is propitious for the man on horseback. Precisely because Jews have never felt so desperate, so helpless, so terrified as today, the sound of sabre rattling and trumpet blasts is welcome. The sabre may not cut; the blasts may frighten nobody, but the gesture is an emotional release."

This statement kept coming back to me again and again as I sat in a New York theater and watched the unfolding of Ben Hecht's play, *A Flag is Born*. The play was moving because it uncovered old wounds that had not yet healed, because it reminded us once again of the indescribable tragedy which has overtaken the Jewish people with their 6,000,000 dead. Yet here was the Man on Horseback with a vengeance, taking advantage of the deep sentiments and feelings of Jews to urge upon them a program bred of despair, of futility, of hopelessness.

Briefly, the theme of the play is that there is no one upon whom the Jew can rely. He is alone in a hostile world. Anti-Semitism is inexplicable. It is a mysterious and eternal disease that pursues the Jew wherever he may be. "The name of my enemy is the world," says Tevya in the play to King Solomon. "The reason I don't know. Who can know the reason why he [the Jew] is hated? Because we are weak, we are hated. Because we are strong, we are hated. . . . Wherever there is a reason that fits nothing and nobody, that's the reason why we are hated." Europe is one vast graveyard for the Jews. They can no longer live or breathe there. The Jews must forsake Europe. Through Ben Hecht, David, the young man who is on his way to Palestine, says: "My father taught me that I belonged in the land where I was born. Then, one day, all the Jews in that land were gathered together like a pile of garbage and burned up. From this I learned that the teachings of my father were wrong. Now the English say to me, 'Come, go back to your father's village—and start over again and breed another garbage pile for Europe.' And I answered them, 'A curse on all the lands and villages of Europe. I go to find a corner of the earth where Jews do not turn into garbage—where Jews can die on the battlefields—instead of a crematorium.' "

What Hecht has done in this play is what its sponsor, the League for a Free Palestine, has been doing for a long time. He has mixed truths with half-truths and thus added to the welter of confusion on a critical issue so deeply in need of clarity and sanity.

Are there Jews who no longer want to live in Europe? Certainly there are. Large numbers of Jews are psychologically incapable of rebuilding their lives in the lands, cities and villages where they witnessed the slaughter of those so dear to them. No one who has any feeling or humanitarian instinct would oppose their leaving.

It is one thing, however, to understand the psychological basis for the desire to leave. But it is quite another thing to say, as Hecht does, that all Jews must leave, that Europe must become "Juden-rein," because anti-Semitism is eternal. Democracy may grow and expand. The old regimes and their fascist leaders who were responsible for the death and torture of the Jews may be wiped out, and in some countries are being wiped out. To Hecht all this matters very little. Europe to him is a garbage dump and thus it will remain forever and ever.

Such an approach will no doubt delight all the fascists and reactionaries who, from Hitler on down, have long been proclaiming that Europe must be rid of its Jews. The belief that the Jew is an alien in all the lands in which he lives is abject defeatism. It is a call to mass suicide. Had Hecht been thoroughly consistent in his play, he would

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have called not only for exodus from Europe but for exodus from America as well. For once one accepts the premise that anti-Semitism is eternal and that what the Nazis have ordained the Jews must fulfill, the basis of Jewish existence has been undermined in all countries. Let some tin-horn fuehrers in America demand that all Jews leave, and the logic of Hecht's play is that the Jews must do as they are told—and agree to leave.

IF ANTI-SEMITISM is eternal, there is no hope for the Jew anywhere, not even in Palestine. The Arabs, too, are non-Jews and therefore anti-Semitism will be eternal amongst them. What chance then has the Jew for security and peace surrounded by the millions of Arabs of the Middle East? "In Palestine we will fight on our own battlefield," shouts Hecht. But whom does he want to fight there? Will he fight British and American imperialism, which care nothing for either Jew or Arab but are concerned only with their imperialist interests? Or will he fight the Arabs, over whom he fawns in his play, but whom his Irgunists and Revisionists have attacked verbally and otherwise time and again, as has been proved by leading Zionists throughout the world? Or will he fight the whole world by himself? One wonders what kind of future Hecht offers to the Jewish community in Palestine. Is it a future where people will have to live in an eternal state of war, with sentries at all gates, on constant guard against the invader?

In his play Hecht, consistent with this point of view, cannot even resist taking a poke at the Soviet Union. "Russia does not tolerate either Semitism or anti-Semitism," he has the Soviet representative say when Tevya appears before the assembly of nations. And later on: "Russia considers clarification unnecessary and imperialistic." Ben Hecht certainly knows, as do millions of others, that anti-Semitism is a criminal offense in the Soviet Union and that there is complete equality. And that also in Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Poland, countries friendly to the Soviet Union, laws have been passed making anti-Semitism a crime.

To make his attack on the USSR, Hecht willfully ignores the statements of Louis Levine, an ardent Zionist and chairman of the Jewish Committee of Russian Relief, who, after returning from an extensive tour of the Soviet

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Union, wrote: "For one, they [the Soviets] have banished forever anti-Semitism from their land; I did not find a single trace of it anywhere, any time, during my tour. Religious practices are observed freely and by large numbers of Soviet Jews. Jewish culture—education, theater, literature, etc.—flourishes." And Hecht must also ignore a statement made in 1942 by James N. Rosenberg, honorary chairman of the Joint Distribution Committee: "Of some 1,750,000 Jews who succeeded in escaping the Axis . . . about 1,600,000 were evacuated by the Soviet government from Eastern Poland and subsequently occupied Soviet territory and transported far into the Russian interior and beyond the Urals. About 150,000 others managed to reach Palestine, the United States and other countries beyond the seas. . . . On the basis of this data, which I believe to be conservative, Russia has saved over ten times as many Jews from Nazi extermination as all the rest of the world put together. . . ."

And the final fact is that had it not been for the Red Army's heroic stand at Stalingrad, forcing Hitler to divert troops from the Middle East, Palestine would have been overrun by the Wehrmacht.

Many people have been deceived into believing that Hecht and his American League for a Free Palestine are really serious about fighting imperialism; that they really want to kick Britain out of Palestine. Yet neither he nor the League has ever said a word against American and British imperialism and their treatment of the Jews in the Displaced Persons camps. Neither Hecht nor the League has ever protested against the fact that in those zones which imperialism controls, Nazis are still running wild and murdering Jews. They have never told the people that one fundamental reason for pogroms in Poland today derives from the moral, financial and material assistance which Washington and London are giving such fascists as General Anders and General Bor. And naturally Hecht would keep secret the fact that in the Soviet zone in Germany there never were any DP camps for Jews and that Jews were given every opportunity to rebuild their lives with the full assistance of the Red Army.

It would be well for American Jewry, as for Americans generally, to

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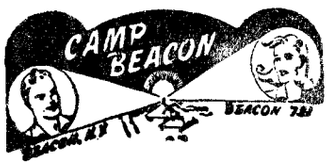

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heed not the Hechts and the host of other self-appointed spokesmen for European Jewry, but the leaders of European Jewry themselves, who rose to leadership in the ghettoes of Warsaw and Bialystok and Vilno, in the forests and swamps and concentration camps. Dr. Adolph Berman, a leading Zionist, a vice president of the Jewish Central Committee in Poland and a member of the Polish National Council, stated in the summer of 1945: "Our great joy in this hour of liberation is dimmed by the great destruction and the great cemetery into which Polish Jewry has been flung. But life is stronger than death. Before our very eyes there begins to sprout new Jewish communities in tens of cities and villages. Life begins to throb again. Our economic and cultural positions must be rebuilt. . . . The interests of tens of thousands of our people demand this of us. Our national honor demands this. This reconstruction must be the symbol of the will to live, of the fortitude and the courage of the Jewish people."

Hecht and his League have attempted to make the issue one of "Palestine Versus Europe," and have thereby done much damage not only to European but Palestine Jewry as well. For there is an inexorable relationship between persecution in Europe and in Palestine, and it is the very same imperialist forces that are responsible for both. If these forces are victorious in Europe, the fate of Palestinian Jewry will be a very doubtful one.

Hecht refuses to face the fact that the fundamental cause of Palestine's repeated crises is imperialism's policies. He therefore says nothing of one of imperialism's major weapons—divide and rule—and that the only way to overcome it is through the unity of the Jewish and Arab masses against imperialism in order to establish a free and democratic Palestine where both peoples will be able to achieve their national rights.

What Hecht preaches is a renunciation of the basic principle that the only guarantee of security and democracy in any country, for any people, lies in the struggle to maintain and extend democratic institutions. Hecht's outlook can only sap and undermine the morale of a people because it immobilizes them and paralyzes any effective struggle against fascism and anti-Semitism.

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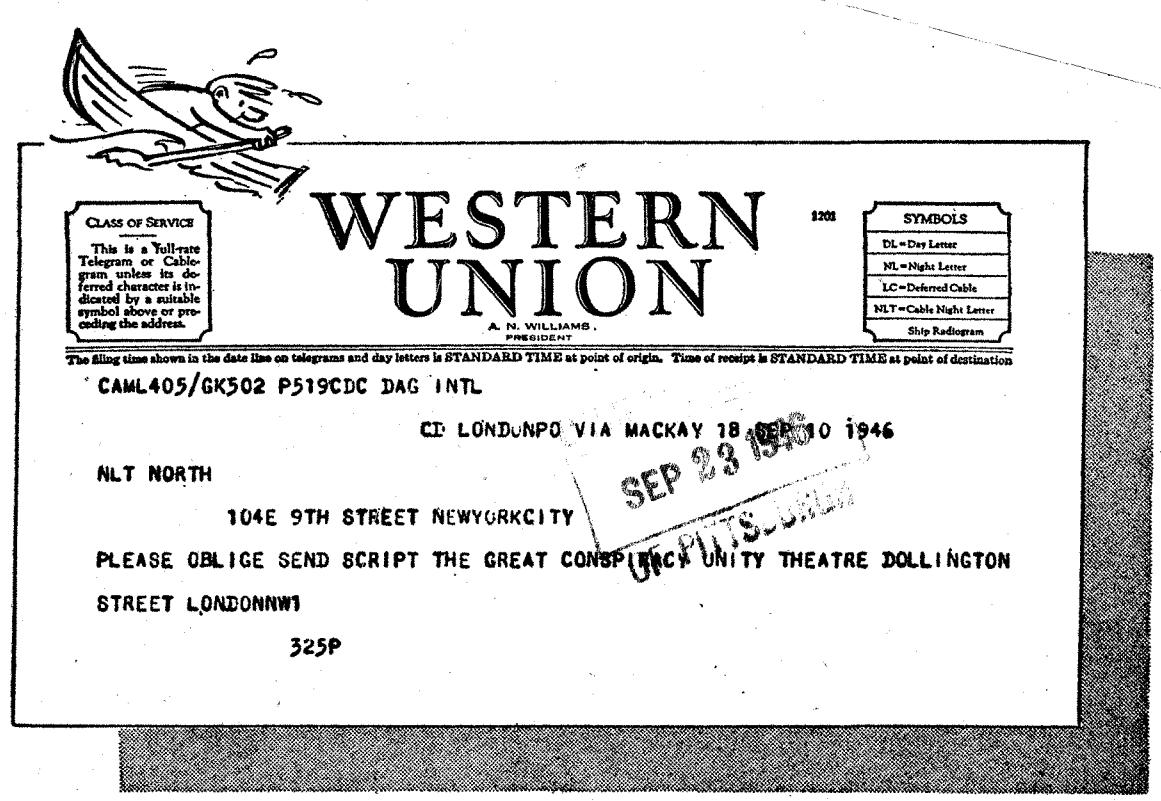

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new masses

OCTOBER 1, 1946

Vol. LXI, No. 1 15¢ in Canada 20¢

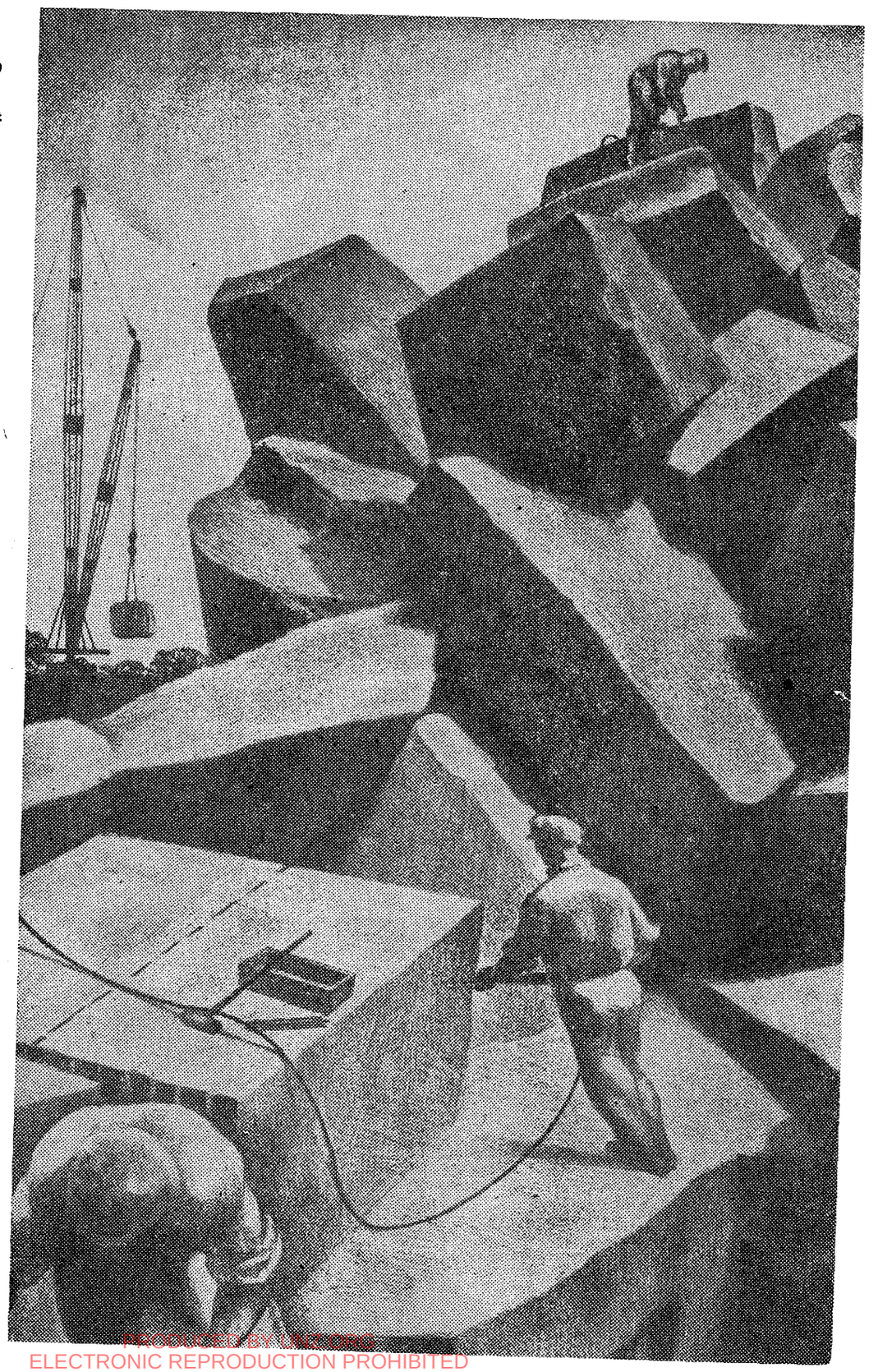
WALL STREET FIRES WALLACE

by Virginia Gardner

SIMONOV ON THE AMERICAN THEATER

WHAT THE TEACHERS DID IN NORWALK

by Charles Humboldt



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just a minute

WE HESITATE to add our few lines to the Mississippi of words already devoted to the Louis-Mauriello fight, but we would like to pass on an observation that we heard concerning the outcome. We heard the broadcast of the, pardon us, fight from a dashboard radio of a parked automobile. Grouped around the car, in a scene duplicated by the thousands all over the city, were about ten people: taxi-drivers, a couple of waiters from a nearby hash house, and some passers-by. When Tami landed that first right-handed haymaker, there was a polite gasp. Nothing serious, but certainly a surprise. Then Joe began to work on his opponent, and two minutes later the fight was over. Said one of the listeners, "It looked for a minute like youth was gettin' the better of old age, but Louis can still give away a few years." "I guess that wallop that Tami handed Joe made him mad," explained a second. "You're right," said another, "he shouldna hit him." Everybody agreed with the last speaker. He shouldna hit him.

YOU may be surprised, what with the truck strike settled, to see us appear in a meager sixteen-page issue once more. But ours is a tough story.

It seems that a large paper supply, including ours, has been pushed onto a siding somewhere in New Jersey, along with tons of other stuff. In order to get it moving again, we must first find the precise sidetrack, and then get all the stuff in front of it moved off. This was not done at press-time; hence the small issue. But the printer promises us that this will positively be the last lighter-than-air NM.

OUR campaign for a subscription in every library is gaining momentum. Thus far ninety-seven public and university libraries within the larger schools and cities are carrying NM for the first time. Also some ten YM and YWCA's have also agreed to carry us on their shelves. This is a marked improvement over previous years, but there are still countless thousands of community houses, libraries and universities that should make NM available to their students if the free circulation of ideas in a free school system is to mean anything. That is where you come in. When you finish reading this copy of NM, reach for your hat and make for your nearest local library. Check to see if they carry us on their shelves. If they don't, speak to the librarian about it. *The subscription is paid for* out of the Art Young Memorial Fund, and all that is required is the consent of the librarian to complete the matter. Most of the ninety-seven libraries mentioned above are now getting NM through the tireless efforts of a grand eighty-two-year-old lady, who wishes to be anonymous. So you can see that your visit to a local library is hardly, by comparison, any work at all. Let us hear about it soon.

ADDENDUM: Our ten-series forum on aspects of American civilization (see page 12) will include Howard Fast, who will lecture on American literature. We will announce the names of other lecturers as soon as they are secured. Meanwhile our information indicates that the series will be invaluable to any serious student of American society.

A. B. MAGIL, NM executive editor, will cover the Conference of Progressives that will be held in Chicago on September 28. This conference, called by Elmer Benson, Jo Davidson, Harold Ickes, Philip Murray, C. B. Baldwin, Walter White and others, represents numerous organizations fighting for Roosevelt's policies, including the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions, the CIO Political Action Committee and the National Citizens PAC. In addition, Magil will speak in Madison, Wis., October 1; in Chicago Oct. 2, 4 and 5; Milwaukee Oct. 6; Denver Oct. 8; Seattle Oct. 11 and Tacoma Oct. 12. He will be in California from Oct. 15 to 23, speaking in Oakland, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Other meetings will be held in St. Louis and Detroit. The subject of his talks will be "America's Future: Capitalism or Socialism?"

J. F.

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Cover: "Granite for Monuments," a lithograph by Louis Lozowick. New Age Gallery.

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WALL STREET FIRES WALLACE

Byrnes and Vandenberg transmit the orders. The plotters of World War III try to gag the growing opposition to their foreign policy.

By VIRGINIA GARDNER

Washington

"Then the Emperor walked along in the procession under the gorgeous canopy, and everybody in the streets and at the windows exclaimed, 'How beautiful the Emperor's new clothes are! What a splendid train! And they fit to perfection!' Nobody would let it appear that he could see nothing, for then he would not be fit for his post, or else he was a fool. . . .

" 'But he has nothing on,' said a little child.

" 'Oh, listen to the innocent,' said its father. And one person whispered to the other what the child had said. 'He has nothing on—a child says he has nothing on!'

" 'But he has nothing on!' at last cried all the people.

"The Emperor writhed, for he knew it was true. But he thought, 'The procession must go on now.' So he held himself stiffer than ever, and the chamberlains held up the invisible train."—From Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales.

ON THE Wednesday afternoon of last week when Sec. of Commerce Henry Wallace was closeted with the President, the minutes ticking into hours, the scene outside the White House was strangely reminiscent. Of what? Then you remembered. It was the death of that other President, Franklin D. Roosevelt. People came then and stood quietly; but there was a war on, and for security reasons they had to stand across the street. Now about 200 people drifted to the west gate of the White House and waited, some of them for more than two hours. When Wallace emerged, from the longest conference the President had held to date, he drove out past the west gate, and someone called out in Spanish, "Viva Wallace!" In reply he too called out something in Spanish.

For a moment everyone thought that Wallace had won a partial victory, even though the compromise worked out would have silenced him until after the Paris conference. Everyone thought that Wallace's July 23 letter to Truman and his Madison Square Garden address would speak for him until he could resume the great debate.

Two days later the political assassination took place. The newspapers which screamed for Wallace's scalp had it. Mr. Byrnes, who undoubtedly had issued an "either-or" ultimatum with the support of Vandenberg, had helped to eliminate from the Cabinet the one obstruction that stood in the way of their American Century imperialism. The Army and Navy heads who momentarily thought that their anti-Wallace pressure was availing them little finally won out. Truman, instead of listening to Robert Hannegan and a few others on the Democratic National Committee who had put up a terrific fight to keep Wallace in the Cabinet because they recognized the popular support behind the Secretary of Commerce, yielded to the Republican high command and the Southern Bourbons. This capitulation by Truman, this victory for Republican reaction and its tory Democratic abettors, again signifies how the memory of Roosevelt and his policies have been betrayed. It is a victory for the war-hungry monopolists, who will seek to make demagogic use of it for the party they own lock, stock and barrel—the GOP.

But it signifies other things too, for the publication of Wallace's letter to Truman, in addition to Wallace's New York speech, has helped to crack wide open the conspiracy of silence. Wallace voiced what great numbers of people were thinking—that the Byrnes-Vandenberg line was not a peace policy but a war policy. Senator Claude Pepper had said it repeatedly for months. Senator Glen Taylor of Idaho, too. But they were muzzled by the press, ignored or buried. They and the Congressmen who also dared criticize our foreign policy had spoken out at the Win the Peace Conference held in Washington last April, but no one except the delegates knew what they said. The press, when it did not ignore them altogether, obscured their remarks in a fog of Red-baiting. It was only after a Cabinet member spoke at a huge rally that the iron curtain was lifted. And now Wallace's enforced resignation means that a great attempt will be made to ring down the iron curtain again, to charge as un-American anyone who speaks out against the administration's foreign policy.

WITH wonderful care, the newspapers had built the myth of a country united on its foreign policy. There were pictures of Byrnes and Vandenberg departing on a plane for Paris, wreathed in smiles, surrounded by Republicans and Democrats; of the ever-smiling little man in the double-breasted suit; of Byrnes receiving a bouquet of flowers from a little miss as he steps off to be tough with Russia and win the peace. Suddenly all this has been spoiled. The people are let in on the truth. This was what the newspapers and the hard-bitten tories in the Republican and Democratic hierarchy could not forgive Henry Wallace. They screamed for his blood. They demanded that he resign. And all the courtiers around the President, all the public figures who have bowed and said, yes, isn't it fine to have a united, non-partisan foreign policy, stand aghast.

But the rumble among the people grows. If they protested in large numbers the attempt to fire Wallace they will now be roused to an even greater anger. No one can miss the meaning of the wires that were pouring into the White House before and after Wallace's dismissal. People were astounded. Whether they were the 5,000 ministers of the Methodist Church who pleaded with Truman that Wallace be retained, or whether they were the rank and file of a union local, they all asked how it is that Roosevelt's best disciple in the government, Wallace, has been thrown out because he spoke his mind. In Wallace's office the mail was piling up five to one in his favor even before he was fired. The conspiracy of silence is being ended and it will be clearer now than ever who are the enemies of peace in the GOP, in the State Department, in the Army and Navy, in Congress,

(*Continued on page* 12)

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LOOKING AT THE AMERICAN THEATER

The wandering nomads along glittering Broadway and the almighty dollar which rules their art. Impressions of "Oklahoma!" and the Actors' Laboratory.

By Konstantin Simonov

Mr. Simonov, well known Soviet playwright and Stalin Prize winner, is the author of the novel "Days and Nights." He recently traveled through the United States with Ilya Ehrenburg.

PEOPLE soon get accustomed to good things, take them for granted and eventually cease to perceive anything remarkable in them. It is useful, therefore, to move away from them sometimes and view these familiar things from a distance. In perspective, it is clear that their commonplace quality was only an optical illusion, and that actually these things are remarkable, inimitable.

Whenever I saw a play or talked to actors in New York, the heart of America's theatrical life, I thought about the Soviet theater, not because of its points of resemblance, but its contrasts. And above all I felt proud and grateful to my country and its social system, remembering the thing that is most remarkable, yet commonplace now to us and, for the time being, impossible in the rest of the world: the total absence of money's domination over art.

As I learned more about the American theater I was struck by this contrast at every step because I should say that of all other arts it is the theater in America that is most hopelessly in thrall to money.

To make this point clear, it is necessary to give an idea of how the American theater is organized. And I hope the reader will forgive me if I start from the very beginning, because even at the outset the American theater is so different from everything we are accustomed to in our country that it is even strange at times to hear the word "theater" applied to both.

I shall start with the word "theater."

In the USSR a theater implies a group of actors, directors, scenic designers, make-up men; that is to say, a body of people who can play in any theater, yet remain true to themselves.

In New York a theater is a place in which anybody can play; some today, others tomorrow.

In the USSR a theater bears the name of a writer, or an art director, or suggests the genre peculiar to this theater.

In New York, the theater is named after the owner of the premises, after a corporation or simply the street on which it is located. Its name is not associated with any group or artistic trend; it is a lucrative place of entertainment, its reputation being determined in the first place by the amount of rent it brings in.

New York has several dozen theaters, the most popular of which are on Broadway. When it is said of a playwright that his play is running on Broadway, it does not mean that it is either good or bad, but simply that it is making plenty of money; for a play which does not make money will immediately be withdrawn from Broadway by the theater-owners.

When a dramatist writes a play in the USSR he takes it to a theater, reads it to the art director and the group of actors. It is accepted or rejected; it may be staged or not.

But in New York a dramatist takes his play neither to an art director, for there is no such person there, nor to a group of actors, for there is no permanent group of actors in New York. The playwright offers his play to the "producer." This may be someone connected with art—a noted director or actor with capital that he is willing to risk on a play. But this is rare. The typical producer is a person whose connection with art is mainly of a financial bent. He loves the theater as a manufacturer of suspenders loves the production of suspenders. If the suspenders sell he will manufacture them and will speak of his suspenders with affection; if they do not sell, he will start manufacturing chewing gum or hot-water bottles.

If business is bad for the theatrical producer and the play brings him no profit, he gives up the theater and tries to extract profit from the fists of a famous boxer. He is not a philanthropic society, he is a businessman: he cannot and he does not want to lose his money.

So the dramatist takes his play to the producer, who, after judging the state of mind of the public, the latest press campaign, the season of the year, the existing rental rates and his financial resources, decides to accept it.

NOW he is faced with two problems: first, premises, second, a director and actors, who are bound by the strongest of links—the dollar. A large theater in the theatrical hub would mean a high rent, but if the play proves a hit, it will bring in big profits. Then there have to be some stars in the cast to assure high box-office receipts, but stars cost big money. In a word, his "artistic"-financial waverings boil down to this: to spend as little money as possible and to secure the biggest profit.

Since there are no permanent theaters, the actors are selected either from the films, radio studios, or from among those who have finished or are finishing one contract and are hoping to find another. The director engaged for the production naturally takes part in choosing the cast, but it is the producer who has the last word on every actor. And if the money required by an actor is higher than estimated, this actor will not play.

At last, the main business is done: the star, whose name will appear in foot-high letters on billboards above the title of the play and the names of the author and director, has been found and contracted. The choice of the rest of the cast depends largely on how much of the general budget is swallowed up by the star or stars. The director may now consider forming an ensemble (if it is possible to think of actors who are to play together for the first time in their lives in terms of an ensemble), but he must keep strictly within the bounds of the budget—everything beyond that is taboo.

The cast is engaged, and here are

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the director, the play and the star. A contract has been signed with the owner of a Broadway theater, according to which he receives a guaranteed percentage of the profits in the form of rent. A reservation in the contract gives him the right to demand that his premises be vacated at any moment if he does not get the guaranteed percentage of profit after the fifth performance. Notwithstanding a play's artistic merits, it will fade into oblivion if it is a financial failure, and the theater will be rented out to those who can pay the guaranteed profit to the owner.

The fate of a play, therefore, is unknown. In the meantime rehearsals begin. The rehearsal period, as may be supposed, is determined not by the significance of the play or by the time needed by the actors to penetrate into the author's conception, or for teamwork of the whole cast, but by far simpler and more "essential" questions; as, for example, the date from which the producer hired the theater, or the sum he has invested in the play.

The directors and actors, who are paid during rehearsals as much or almost as much as for performances, are naturally interested, prompted by the artistic sense which is present even in such conditions, in prolonging the rehearsal period; the producer, on the contrary, who has many expenses during rehearsals and no profits, tries to shorten the time. If he were not afraid of failure and if he thought that the actors could rehearse the play in one day, he would not allow them even an extra hour. This struggle usually ends in some compromise, which is generally closer to the producer's preliminary estimate.

Rehearsals continue day and night, lasting six, eight and even ten hours a day. The important point is not the number of rehearsals, but the number of days. The day is the unit—because days cost money. Rehearsals last on an average twenty-five to thirty-five days.

The settings are designed and constructed while rehearsals are in progress. The scale on which they are done is not determined by the epoch, the fabric of the play or other necessary requirements, but by the producer's scale of doing things and the theater in which the play is to be staged. A trifling little comedy or revue may be produced on a magnificent scale, if the producer has decided to do things in a big way; on the other hand a classic play demanding monumental settings and treatment may be a very shabby affair if it is taken up by a second or third-rate producer.

"The Butcher," oil by Alexander Dobkin. At the ACA Gallery.

The opening night comes at last. The main question — is it a box-office success?—will be settled in five or

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ten days. Critics may foam at the mouth and call the play banal, stupid and trivial, but if it is a box-office success their opinions will be ignored; the play will run for a month, a year, three years, perhaps. On the other hand, critics may shout themselves hoarse praising the depth of the play, its moral significance, its importance for society, but—the day the owner ceases to get his guaranteed percentage he will kick the play out, as a landlord evicts a tenant for non-payment of rent.

LET us take a happier example: a good play, well produced, running in a large theater and scoring a success.

While working in the Soviet theater I heard actors complain that sometimes, due to some changes in the repertory, they had to act in the same play for three or four days in succession. They maintained that this was bad from an artistic point of view, that it had a bad effect on the freshness of the acting. One has to agree with this —there is truth in it. Our theaters usually plan their repertories so that the plays rotate and the actor, as a rule, does not perform in the same play for more than two days running.

I was reminded of this at times in New York. Let us suppose that everything is fine: a good play is making a hit. It would seem that the actors ought to derive artistic satisfaction from their work. This satisfaction very soon becomes a torture, because money interferes with art despotically and unceremoniously. The play is popular and profitable and each day means so many dollars. No one, neither the owner of the theater nor the producer, wants to lose these dollars. So the play must go on every day. It must run until it is exhausted, as long as it is profitable, for one month, two, three months, a year or two or even three without a break. It will run until it ceases to bring in the guaranteed profit.

And the actor may play one and the same role seven or eight times a week for years. It is hard to imagine anything more terrible for an artist. The producer's success becomes the actor's nightmare. He cannot give it up without paying for a breach of contract. He cannot play in any other production because he is engaged in this play every day. He cannot suggest staging a new play, for such a suggestion, while perfectly natural in the Soviet Union, would sound like sheer idiocy to a New York producer. Why should he bring new expenses on himself if the public continues to come to see this play and it still brings in clear profit?

"And with each machine we're giving away, free, an original plot for a historical novel."

A person out for clear profit is not and cannot be interested in art. He is a capitalist, and it would be ridiculous to reproach a capitalist for wanting to get surplus value first and foremost. This is not a wart on his hand that can be removed by a chemical. It is his nature, his heart.

I SAW about ten plays in New York. Their subject and general trend would require a separate article. But, on the whole, it would be hard to imagine anything more deliberately intended to distract attention from any serious social problems that concern the best progressive elements of American society. I would like to take as an example one which has a bearing on the specific points I have raised.

The musical comedy *Oklahoma!*, directed by the famous American film director, Robert Mamoulian, is now in its fourth year on Broadway. It is, perhaps, one of the most sensational successes in the last few years. Acquaintances in art circles, people whose taste I can trust, advised me strongly to see what they considered a lively and interesting production. I went to see it with my interpreter, who had attended its opening three years previously and praised it highly. Like the rest, he stressed the liveliness, buoyancy and spontaneity of the play and its actors.

I watched and wondered. Everything that I had heard about the play seemed to be lacking. Although it had good music, artistic settings, and a cast that played and sang well, from a professional standpoint, there was something stilted and mechanical about the whole thing; it was too automatic —the pauses calculated to coincide with the laughter of the audience, the mechanical smiles, the forced animation.

The whole play was forced, and too noisy; it made you think of a person tortured by anguish, trying to conceal it by speaking very loudly and with a show of artificial cheerfulness.

"Well, how do you like it?" my companion asked me after the first act.

"I don't like it," I answered, and told him the reasons I have given here.

"Somehow I don't think I like it so much now, either," he said. "In any case I like it less now than I did three years ago. I think many of the actors are new. There's something wrong. Anyhow, it isn't what it was three years ago."

I did not doubt the sincerity of his impressions now and of three years ago. The crux of the matter was summed up in the words "three years ago." The actors had been playing in this production almost every evening of the year for three years. It was not a question of whether some of the actors,

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who could not stand the strain or whose contracts expired, had been replaced. They may not have been changed at all, but their acting changed so much in three years that they were unrecognizable. The point was that the incongruous power of money had destroyed the life and soul in art, converting it into an enterprise where the object of exploitation was the actor, and the aim profit.

MY PURPOSE in this article does not include judgment on all the plays I have seen in America, particularly since I had to have an interpreter, and therefore in some cases I might risk making mistakes. I only wanted to speak in general on the principles of organization and the system of the American theater, a system which is in the highest degree alien to art, and makes an artist a slave to the dollar.

Least of all can I blame the actors themselves. They are no more than grains of sand in the orbit of this system.

The power of this system is such that it frequently corrupts people in the arts. They take it as a matter of course, and in the end regard it almost as the only way. Some of them, having ultimately acquired capital, establish art enterprises no better and no worse than others.

But other workers in American theatrical art (I believe they are in the majority), though they, too, revolve in the orbit, cannot, as artists, under any circumstances reconcile themselves to such a situation; they attempt to struggle against the producer's attitude toward art, to defend their rights, but rarely succeed. And what happens to them is not their fault, but their misfortune.

Knowing that American actors do not work in a creative atmosphere, stimulated by a collective and a permanent repertory, I was often surprised to see the successes that some individual actors achieved (in the plays I have seen). These successes of individuals never became successes for the whole ensemble, because the theater as a highly-developed art is attained by years, decades of collective creative work. The most brilliant performance of individual actors cannot create a first-rate theater in the highest sense of the word.

Capitalism has many faces, and has some very ugly grimaces in stock. With reference to art I want to describe a grimace that struck me as incongruous.

In the search for a means of saving great numbers of actors from starvation in the early years of Roosevelt's presidency his administration formed some small permanent theatrical companies on a minimum state subsidy. This measure was put into practice on a fairly wide scale. The companies presented their permanent repertoires in many cities. The more or less normal conditions of work resulting from this measure caused a stir in the theatrical world and gave an impetus to theatrical art; to some theatrical promoters it seemed that the American theater had discovered a way out and was heading in the right direction.

But the general depression gradually lifted, unemployment decreased, state subsidies disappeared and owners of art enterprises, very little interested in the development of their national theater, hastened to reinstate the old tried and trusted methods of extracting profits from theatrical enterprises. The repertory theaters went to the dogs one after another; those that persisted in carrying on their work were boycotted by both producers and owners of theaters, and finally they, too, perished.

The paradox of capitalism proved stronger than art.

A FEW more words on the moral state of the actor who has to work under existing conditions in the American theater.

The American theater today reminds me of a hotel more than anything else. The people living in it are often nice, even very nice people, but when all is said and done, it is only a hotel with a definite manner of living, and no matter how nice the people there may be they are not at home, they are only travellers on their way somewhere else.

Actors go from company to company; they step into the next production as they would stop at a hotel. They may not be pleased with the room—their role—they think the furniture is not well arranged or a picture on the wall is not to their taste, but is it worthwhile making any changes if, within a week or a month, they will leave for another hotel? Everyone has a perfectly reasonable and natural desire to have his own corner and his own home. But in America this natural desire rarely exists in theatrical art, and I knew of no people more "homeless" in art than actors of the American stage.

Under capitalism houses are built primarily for profit. If it pays—houses are built. But if the existing situation starts a housing crisis, it will persist. No charitable persons will be found to build at a loss.

Something of the kind is taking place in the American theater. American actors wander like nomads through the hotels of their art, not because they want to but because of a housing crisis in art, artificially created by theatrical entrepreneurs. True, this is a catastrophe for art, but it is advantageous for the entrepreneur. In anything that concerns the dollar the conclusions of the pocket will prevail.

Still, I saw one theater in America which is not contaminated by the dollar. It is a small place in Hollywood, called the Actors' Laboratory. The premises were bought from some auto-repair company and converted from a garage into a theater. It has a stage and a seating capacity of 300. It was organized by a group of progressive screen actors not for the sake of profit. They became its owners, and they will not allow any entrepreneur to fatten on art. They play late at night and rehearse in the evening and at night, as soon as they are free from filming.

The artists of this theater have worked in close cooperation for years; they are not haunted by the spectre of the dollar. They work seriously and achieve fine results. I saw their production of Ben Jonson's *Volpone;* it was splendid in form and profound in content. The production was the fruit of long and intensive work, the period of which was not determined by contracts and fines, but by something that is most unusual for the American theater but customary for the Soviet theater: the artistic finish of a production.

A theater where the actors do not work for profit or cheap popularity is an excellent manifestation. I should like to say more about it, but unfortunately that would lead me too far afield, as this theater is not typical of the American theater as a whole. And this is still another grimace of capitalism. In a rich country which was spared in two wars, one has to cite as an example of genuine theatrical art a little playhouse working in the premises of a former garage, rehearsing at night and maintaining itself on the earnings of about thirty enthusiastic actors.

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TEACHER NEEDS MORE THAN AN APPLE

You can't make a go of it on salaries that start at $1,300, they said in Norwalk. How the citizens felt about it. A first-hand account.

By CHARLES HUMBOLDT

Norwalk, Conn.

"YESSIR," said the short order cook, wiping the counter. "It's like the old gag: I ain't seen so much fuss since the hogs et my grandpappy." He laughed at his own joke. "It couldn't of been hotter when the English burnt the town."

"And who's burning it now?" I asked.

"Not the teachers. Maybe it's those officials on the boards playin' with recognition like a little girl with a new dolly. Or maybe that big airplane company boss Connery got his fingers in. Anyway, don't let 'em fool you with that Florence Nightingale stuff about the tender souls of children. A stomach ain't much tougher, and I like to see a teacher eat as well as a bank lawyer."

That was sample number one of public opinion. But I was starting cold and needed some facts.

The Norwalk "troubles" first started in February when the teachers' contracts came up for discussion. The teachers said they couldn't live decently on their past wages and the Board of Education promised to think about it. After much heart searching, the Board of Education, which is an elected body, decided in favor of the teachers and went to the Board of Estimate, which is an appointed body, to report on how much money was needed for wage increases. The Board of Estimate refused to appropriate the sum requested and the Board of Education shrugged its shoulders and scratched an empty palm at the teachers.

By then it was April and the contracts should have been signed in March. So the teachers went to Sidney Vogel, a lawyer who had handled a few labor cases in town. Mr. Vogel, we want your candid advice. "I knew they were a bit scared of me," Vogel explained. "Otherwise they'd have asked for more than advice right away. 'You can't win on advice,' I told them. I gave them a picture of the rocky road ahead and how they'd have the book thrown at them if they meant to stand up for their livings. To tell the truth, I was a little scared of *them*. I didn't know whether they could take it when the baiting began."

The teachers, all members of the Teachers' Association, went home to talk things over. A week later they sent their Professional Committee to tell Vogel they meant business.

"Well, we went to the Board of Education for a talk," said Vogel in his office, offering me a cigarette. "They thought we were coming with our hats in our hands. Instead we asked for recognition for the Professional Committee. It was like being invited to a formal dinner and spitting on the table. They accused us of using all the dirty words: collective bargaining, union, negotiation of contract, though I hadn't said a word about any of that yet. Okay, I thought, looking at Serena, the chairman of the board—go through your dance, but you'll end up just where you landed with your insurance agents."

Alexander R. Serena, district manager of the John Hancock Life Insurance Co., used to call his salesmen in for morning "conferences." While they listened nervously, he gave them his philosophy of life and bawled out those who hadn't met their quotas. The agents finally got sick of him and organized. One morning they stared hard at the gauleiter and told him about their union. Since then, he's resigned to being a windbag. One of the agents told me that when I inquired.

The Board of Education met again, with and without the teachers, in public and private (executive session, it is called), discussed, argued, sweated and probably swore, and recognized the teachers on June 25.

Meanwhile the Board of Estimate, Horatius at the budget, scorned surrender. They fought it out all summer and on August 10 announced there were no further funds available for salary increases. In the same issue of *The Norwalk Hour* in which one member of the board appealed to the sportsmanship of the teachers, another member was reported to declare, "I wouldn't give them another nickel if the schools never opened."

THE temper of the Board of Estimate encouraged the Board of Education to take an action which the teachers' Professional Committee termed "a shocking betrayal of the principle of bargaining in good faith." At a closed meeting in Norwalk High School on August 14, it voted to discontinue negotiations with the Norwalk Teachers' Association, withdrew recognition from it, and ordered all contracts to be in its hands by August 22, noon. All principals and supervisors who were supporting the teachers' action were invited to the office of the superintendent of schools to listen to an address by bank and probate lawyer Frederick F. Lovejoy, a member of the Board of Education. He wanted to talk to them on the inadvisability of, or, as he put it, on the "question of the propriety of their belonging to a union of teachers."

I asked Vogel about Lovejoy. "A man you know where you stand with, a smart, honest man. An honest Tom Girdler."

Lovejoy was joined by Board of Estimate member Arthur D. Sylvester, who sent an open letter to the teachers threatening them with "public revulsion," accusing them of coercion, and proposing to hire outside teachers. Mr. Sylvester is rumored to represent certain Du Pont interests in Norwalk.

The principals and supervisors listened quietly to Mr. Lovejoy, and decided to stick with the teachers. On August 22, Alice Cole, chairman of the Professional Committee, presented 225 unsigned contracts to the Board of Education. Six teachers out of 236 had voted to return. Among the six were two sisters of US Senator Brien McMahon. The senator, who has a good labor record, refused comment but was supposed to be in a state of disgust. He was not pressed by sympathetic reporters.

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Other things were not so rosy either for the anti-teacher forces, as certain letter writers to the *Hour* called them. The Connecticut Teachers Association offered "financial, physical and moral assistance" to its affiliate. A citizen of Norwalk, a former chairman of the Board of Education, Charles A. Haas, filed a show-cause against the board which threatened them with an injunction against hiring outside teachers. (The Board of Education was said to have its eye on certain old ladies on the New York retirement list). An *Hour* editorial advised the board to stop holding closed meetings.

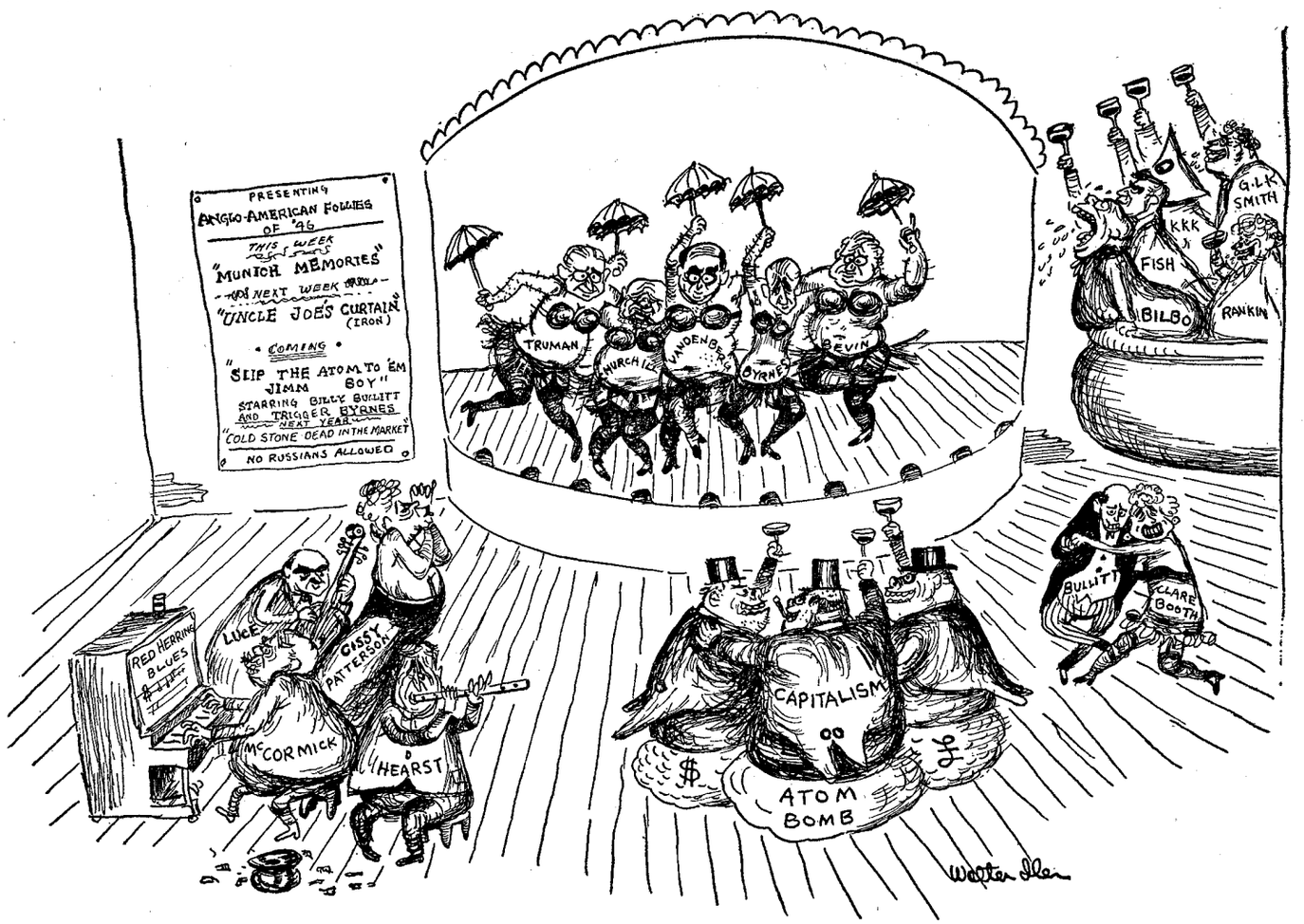
The board was further outraged when Alonzo G. Grace, State Commissioner of Education, urged recognition of the teachers, recommended a complete investigation of the Norwalk school system to the State Board of Education, and suggested to Lovejoy and Sylvester that hiring abroad would be in violation of the contracts to which the Board of Education was bound because it had informed no teachers of their termination before March 1.

Letters were also coming into the local paper, such as one in which a Mother and Taxpayer opined that "Our teachers would certainly show themselves a spineless group if they too (like the officials) were to go back on their decision," in their case to fight for a living.

So, two weeks after the school board had thrown down the gage to the teachers, it pulled in its tail and recognized them again. Grumbling that it didn't know what had happened to New England, it settled down to talking lump sums. So did Mr. Vogel and the teachers.

Several months before when the budget was up for approval, the Board of Education asked the Board of Estimate and Taxation to appropriate $1,025,875 for the school payroll. The latter appropriated just $813,-652.90. This did not even cover the amount required to equalize the pay of men and women in the school system, approximately $32,000. (Equalization of pay had become mandatory by state law since the last budget, but the Board of Estimate thought it had found some technicality to avoid paying it.) The teachers therefore pointed out to the Board of Education that it now opposed their demand to be paid what the Board of Education itself had felt they should be paid. Nevertheless, they proposed a compromise. Would the school board press for an additional $90,112, which was one-half the difference between the sum made available by the Board of Estimate and the amount requested by the Board of Education? Mr. Serena answered: he would press for $31,000; he thought confidentially he could get it from his friends on the Board of Estimate. That body had been letting out similar hoarse whispers.

"I asked them," Vogel told me, "whom they thought they were fooling? In a polite way of course. That thirty-one grand was no present. It was not for salary increases but to equalize the pay of the men and women. When it finally occurred to



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them that they couldn't evade that issue, they decided to play Santa Claus with it. With that amount not a single man teacher or supervisory employe would get a penny more." No one had to look that gift horse in the mouth to know what was wrong with it, so the teachers refused to bid.

WHAT did people here think of all this? "It depends on *what* people," young Charles Lee said, smiling. I had seen his name signed to a letter in the *Hour* and had rung his bell in the late afternoon. We sat on the porch. It turned out that he was Reverend Charles W. Lee of the First Methodist Church, and that he had studied under Dr. Harry F. Ward at Union Theological in New York. "It depends on who they are, how much they know, or what they're willing to learn. My wife's from Herrin, Illinois, so you needn't ask her how she feels about it. Nor me."

I looked at his church across the street, and read the slogan in the case standing on the lawn: "People would not be lonely if they built bridges instead of walls."

"I can tell you about the veterans," he offered, noticing my discharge button. "The city recently appropriated a few thousand dollars to throw a block party for the veterans of Norwalk. A number of my boys told me that if the city was so hard up as not to be able to pay its teachers decent wages, the vets could do without this expensive show of politicians' love."

I learned that the National Association of Manufacturers had tried taking a hand in guiding Norwalk opinion. A letter to its local members suggested that they invite "your" clergymen to tea from time to time. In Norwalk the host was the president of the Hat Corporation of America. The clergymen were agreeably surprised, until they discovered that big businessmen were catching religion all over the New England states in obedience to their parent body.

More important, Lee thought, as a factor impeding some people's understanding of the teachers' struggle was Norwalk's traditional attitude toward industry, which of course benefitted only the employers. "The administration's policy is always: low wages, low taxes; everything for industry. They might as well say, nothing for the worker. It's characteristic of the backwardness of our outlook that we pay $1,800 to a male teacher and $1,300 to a woman for the same work. They're only now beginning to see any wrong in that. I've told my congregation—and some of them ask me why I have to stick my neck out on these issues—that a victory for the teachers will go a long way toward scrubbing Norwalk's grimy conscience."

I asked Reverend Lee why a town as rich as Norwalk balked at paying its teachers a living wage. I had seen the wire-enclosed plants of South Norwalk, flanked by workers' frame houses, and I remembered the outlying estates and the shore places of their owners and managers. "Irving Freese can tell you more about that than I can," he said. "He's been Socialist candidate for mayor and his specialty is taxes."

Freese was standing in shirtsleeves outside his small photographic supply shop when I introduced myself. We got down to business at once. He told me there had been no adequate tax survey made for the city of Norwalk since 1913. Not less than ten million dollars had been lost to the community through industry's escaping proper taxation. For example, the Hat Corporation of America, largest of its kind in the world, is assessed at $690,000. This includes its plant and office equipment, factory machinery and stock. General Aircraft Equipment Inc., second largest holder of industrial property in Norwalk, assessed itself at $95,000. This evaluation was so ridiculous that the local tax commissioner blushingly raised it to $265,500. The man who certified the lower valuation was Paul R. Connery, local Democratic boss, member of the firm of Tammany (a Republican) & Connery, the town's Corporation Counsel—and a vice-president of General Aircraft. It was officials of corporations like these who called the teachers "chiselers."

I was grateful to Freese, but I was not quite happy about him. Every time I tried to get him to talk about the teachers he went back to taxes. He never wanted to connect the two, though it was obvious that if the industries of Norwalk were properly assessed, all city employes could be granted wage increases without stretching an eyelash. I remembered that when I first came up, a reporter from the *Bridgeport Herald* was kidding him. "Your uncle's going to have his hands full soon with those Bridgeport teachers. They're getting mighty riled up at old Jasper." Freese looked at him and began to shiver as though he were deathly cold. I wanted to tell him to put his coat on. He is a nephew by marriage to Jasper MacLevey, the "Socialist" mayor of neighboring Bridgeport, whose teachers are up in arms at a cut in their appropriation. Such an uncle complicates matters. There are two sides to every question.

(This is the first of a two-part article. The second will appear next week.)

portside patter

by BILL RICHARDS

The Hearst press has hired Louis Adlon, son of Berlin's Hotel Adlon owner, to report conditions in Germany. The Nuremburg trials seem to have diminished Hearst's supply of writers.

●

Joe Ryan has been accused of knifing organized labor by leading his AFL longshoremen past CIO picket lines. The wound will heal but it still leaves an ugly scab.

●

There are reports that Secretary Byrnes may resign because of ill health. It's certain, however, he isn't nearly as sick as our foreign policy.

●

The New York "Times" has announced editorially that it is definitely behind Byrnes. On the other hand, Byrnes is just as definitely behind the times.

●

King George is slated to return to Greece sometime this month. It would have been better if they had stuffed George instead of the ballot box.

●

Republican leaders are confident that a GOP victory in 1948 will bring prosperity. It would undoubtedly be the dawn of a new error.

●

Westbrook Pegler writes that Henry Wallace has "the appearance of having spent the night in a culvert." Pegler must be thinking of the culvert he went through years ago on his way to the sewer.

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REVEILLE FOR STRAW MEN

A guest editorial by MILTON BLAU

MONOPOLY has changed its cultural tactics. It can no longer rely on its bleary-eyed snipers to pick off the men of culture who move in the direction of progress. The times move too swiftly and the preparations for imperialist war must be speeded up. The stakes are large—there is the Soviet Union to sack, and the world to plunder. But the road is not smooth. There are things in the way—the people of the United States with their hopes for peace, and the damnable truth which persists in raising its head and in shouting: this is crime, this is the mad work of homicides. Snipers are not enough. The scattered shots of the Woltmans, Schlesingers, Luces, Farrells, Flynns, Stolbergs and Bromfields are not enough. But altogether in a band what might they not do to clear the road for reaction and fascism?

The hollow bugle sounds and the straw men tumble into line. A few brisk orders and the regiment is formed. The American Writers Association hoists its strange flag for "liberty" and dispatches its battle communiques. The regiment wheels right-about and attacks that new "invading army of the Kremlin," the American Author's Authority.

Now, exactly what is it that they have attacked?

The AAA is a plan first proposed by James M. Cain—who was active in the Democrats for Dewey campaign in 1944. Mr. Cain's proposals were heard and approved by the Screen Writers Guild by a vote of 343 to 7, in spite of the tremendous Red-baiting campaign conducted by the film monopoly. Essentially AAA proposed that authors no longer surrender the rights to material as a part of the sales agreement; that literary material no longer be sold outright, but that it be leased. This would permit the author a larger economic return for his work on which film, radio, book and magazine companies clean up huge fortunes. It would also give the author a voice in what is to be done with his material, in contrast to the present situation in which the author has no more to say about what's done with his work than Wallace had about the Byrnes-Vandenberg foreign policy. The AAA plans to control the copyrights of authors and to protect the rights and interests of authors under the jurisdiction of the authors' own organizations, Mr. Cain writes, much as ASCAP now works to protect the interests of composers.

Some of the critics of the plan claim the AAA would constitute a monopoly. This is a wild cry. First, far from projecting a monopoly, the plan is an attack on the monopolies which tightly control the writing fields; the Authority proposes to loosen the grip of big capital on the author. Second, monopolies are not formed by writers coming together in economic associations any more than workers in trade unions form monopolies.

In voting on and approving the plan the members of the Screen Writers Guild passed a resolution "*that there be no discrimination in the rights or treatment accorded by AAA to any piece of written material by reason of its content.*" But such a resolution, which testifies to the apolitical nature of the plan, is immediately overlooked by the strange minds which make up the American Writers' Association. What is clear and positive in the idea for an Authority is the fact that it recognizes that writers, big ones and little ones, are exploited by the various monopoly groups and that it will attempt to lessen that exploitation.

B. Golden.

Mr. Cain, in his outline of the plan, describes written material as "property"—making writers, in this light, "property owners." With formulations such as these the AAA is made to appear as a sort of panacea for writers, a plan which would end almost all the problems faced by this group of cultural workers. The AAA does not deal with the critical question of new writers entering the field. It also makes no provision for protecting writers from the debasing "content" policies of the monopolies. Problems of such a nature can only be solved when writers enter into a many-sided struggle against the anti-cultural monopolies, which not only squeeze the writer economically but seek to turn his work into a commodity made to their measure. Yet it can be readily seen that the AAA is a form through which writers can win a more equitable reward for their talent.

It would be wrong to assume that the people who formed the American Writers Association do not know all this. What, then, can be their God-awful haste to attack the AAA as a "Communist-controlled plan to establish a literary dictatorship," when the evidence is so foolishly thin? Their names alone give half the answer: Louis Bromfield, Clarence Budington Kelland, Clare Boothe Luce, John T. Flynn, Norman Thomas, Eugene Lyons, Louis Waldman and Benjamin Stolberg. James T. Farrell tags along with his vociferous support for this unpopular front of reaction, this coalition of Republicans, Social-Democrats and Trotskyites.

The haste? The war plans are being readied. The ghastly vision of their

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anti-Soviet and anti-people's war hangs before their eyes. They are done with sniping. The tactic now is the broad assault. The attack against the AAA is with a spiked purpose, for the AWA means to assault and disrupt all the existing organizations of writers. Their hope is to intimidate writers and to keep them from siding with the progressive forces for peace. They are afraid that any writer's movement away from monopoly control will hamper the use of the media of cultural expression for anti-Soviet and war propaganda.

There is one fortunate factor. The American Writers Association gives fair warning of its intentions to all writers. This comes accidentally and as an unintended gift. A clumsiness is involved in the way it handles the tools the Nazis left behind. It would be a tragic danger to culture and the people if this front for reaction is given the opportunity for practice and perfection.

Wall St. Fires Wallace

(*Continued from page 3*)

in the top Washington officialdom where Truman stands trembling before the Wall Street war lords and rushes forth to do their bidding. Even reporters are unlimbering and asking the State Department embarrassing questions.

While Mr. Wallace waited to hear how Drew Pearson got the letter he had sent Truman last July, it was common knowledge among correspondents that Pearson got it from the State Department. The Department hoped that the release of the letter would add fuel to the fires it was building under Wallace. But its effect has been quite different. It turned out to be an even more powerful argument than his speech in showing where atom-bomb diplomacy is leading us. It was for this reason that the pack of wolves were sent howling at him. And their victory in having him removed from the Cabinet may prove small compared to the fury which it will unleash among Americans who perhaps for the first time see that in Wallace's dismissal the Roosevelt heritage in foreign policy is being deliberately and systematically smashed. No longer can those who violate America's real interests—the need for peace and ever-expanding democracy—keep foreign policy from becoming the central issue of the election campaign. It is on this issue that the fight must be won.

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"THE FRONT PAGE"—AGAIN

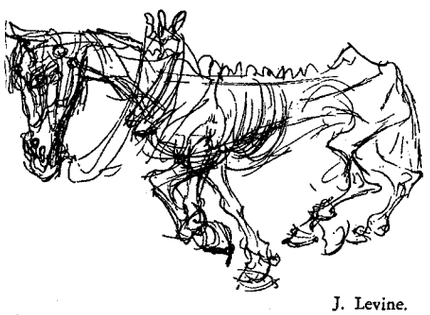
The revival retains enough hustle for melodrama, but its pretensions to anything more are gone.

By ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

AROUND the turn of the century a change occurred that was to have a greater effect upon journalism than the invention of the telegraph, which had squeezed out the smaller independent publishers and fastened tighter the clamp of big business.

The effects of this change are the core of *The Front Page*, Ben Hecht's and Charles MacArthur's twenty-year-old melodrama currently being revived at the Royale Theater.

Ignored by the historians of American journalism, except in embarrassed asides, this change, the introduction of large-scale display advertising, made the advertisers—big business in the new relationship of virtual partners—more than ever the dominating force in the American press. The press became more directly than before a class instrument. Circulation came to stand not for human beings, but as the basis for advertising rates. The cynicism that corrupted the press cut deepest into the men who gathered and wrote the "news;" and it is the distinction of *The Front Page* that it gave a literary expression, long overdue, to this reality. The play appeared in the bootleg era when the development had reached its climax, when the gangster, the newspaper owner and the political boss were functioning, without incorporation papers, of course, as a syndicate. What the successful reporter had become in the face of this reality was an embittered, cynical, foul-mouthed, calloused violator of his profession. In presenting at least an approximation of him, Hecht and MacArthur smashed the idiotic older convention of the reporter as crusader. I write "older" convention, for what Hecht and MacArthur produced turned into a new convention, and has now itself become unreal. From the romantic cynic whom Hecht and MacArthur show swapping abuse with his boss you would never know the enormous distance that has come to separate reporter and management. In his virtuoso attitudes you would never realize how the glamor has drained out of him since the personality spotlights came to be reserved for the syndicated names, and you would never guess from Hecht and MacArthur's rugged cynics the men who made a union possible in what was supposed to be the most individualistic of the professions. That union, among other things, has made false as well as offensive the callousness toward the Negro that fills the dialogue. (This is not intended to damn the play for not saying what it couldn't twenty years ago; but the treatment of the Negro was as offensive then as it is now. The timeless human elements that would have kept the play timely are absent.)



J. Levine.

The action of *The Front Page* revolves around the hanging of a demented anarchist who had shot a Negro policeman in resisting arrest. Elections are a few days off and the city officials, in order to pull the "law-and-order" vote, have blown up the prisoner into a Red Revolution. Though the prisoner is obviously unbalanced, the administration, in order to get the supposedly vengeful Negro vote, is out to hang the man before election day, and beat the humanitarians who are trying to get a reprieve from the governor. The climax comes when the prisoner, after shooting his way out at a psychiatric examination with the sheriff's own gun, virtually drops into the lap of one of the reporters. The latter has just given up his press card to marry and go East to a "decent" job in advertising; but this chance at the scoop of his life makes him forget bride and new career. It also makes the authors forget their realistic intentions. The play floats away in mystical fog.

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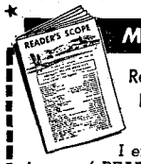

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enough hustle for melodrama. But its pretensions to anything more are gone with the situation that, in its year, made the play so revelatory. Such social commentary as the play contains, on the matter of a corrupt press, corrupt politicians and their mutual ally, the gangster, has little more substance than street corner skepticism. So far as the audience is given to understand, things are as they are not because the big newspapers have a class function to perform but because a fascination for romantic evil, for playful lawlessness, is part of the "newspaper game."

In literary work when the conclusion does not grow inevitably from what the author has set down, he seeks to make his climaxes, which appear to fulfill the action, serve as his explanation. Having failed to show the economic and social compulsions that have made editor and reporter behave like brutalized idiots, the supposed "realist" authors fall back on the worst sentimentalities of their profession.

Thus *The Front Page* is stultified by the uncompleted thinking, finished off with mysticism, that generally characterizes Hecht's work. We get the banal paradoxes of romanticism: the only reasonable character is the madman; the only noble one a prostitute. What Hecht puts forth, in his central character, as a mystical identity of a man and his profession, is simply pathology, misunderstood.

At some points it is hard to tell how much the confusion is due to muddy production and how much to muddy writing. Arnold Moss, as editor Walter Burns, seemed to be overacting until one listened to the lines. Lew Parker as Hildy Johnson was breezily effective until the exaggerations in his relationship with Burns threw him. The best performance and the best-written part was that of Sheriff Hartman, played by William Lynn. Nonentity in public life was here set down in a memorable portrait.

Recent Films

THE first Soviet technicolor film, *Russia on Parade*, is now playing at New York's Stanley Theater. What is fascinating about this picture is not the technicolor, which has yet to reach our technical achievements in this field, but the remarkable variety of Soviet peoples on display. Hour after hour Stalin, other members of the Presidium and General Eisenhower watch the

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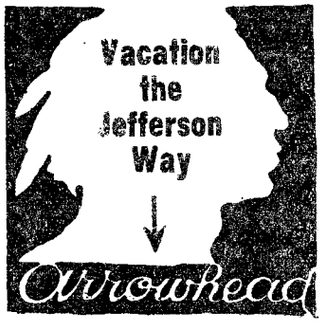

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Uzbeks, Buriat Mongols, Kasaks, Yahutsks, Turkomens, Karelians, Latvians, Georgians, Ukrainians, White Russians and dozens of other national groups proudly display their dances, athletic prowess, national costumes, and ensemble exercises. A section of our critical press thought that the stuff on display was old hat, especially the campfire demonstrations, the "Rockette" formations and the mass calisthenics. What these people forget is the fact that scarcely a quarter of a century ago most of these national groups, living in the Czarist prison-house, had never even seen a sports event, let alone participated in one of them. It is hard to believe, watching the Tadjik girls demonstrate their fitness in brief sports costumes, that only a short time ago their mothers had to veil themselves in public. On the same bill is *Moscow Music Hall*, a cross-section of dance and song of the Soviet Union. If, like me, you are a pushover for the subtlety, grace and dignity of the various national dances, especially the Ukrainian, this film is your dish.

HORIZON FILMS, a new documentary producing company (16 mm) has just released its first film, *Of These Our People*. It deals with anti-Semitism, and answers the better-known slanders of our native fascists by showing the part that Jews played in building up our country, from the earliest pioneers to the Howard Fasts, Max Webers, Hank Greenbergs, Ben Golds, Yehudi Menuhins and others of contemporary life. It shows the teeming thousands living in poverty, working in the stores, shops and factories of our big cities, as well as those working on the farms in every state of the union. Having once seen this film, no one will be taken in by the monstrous fables that all Jews are rich, and are different from other folk. In its brief two reels, *Of These Our People* demonstrates that the Jews, like other minorities, and unlike the vilifiers of national groups, are an integrated part of the life that goes to make up America. This film should be given the widest possible audience. The commercial houses will not show it, of course, thus leaving the burden up to fraternal, social and political groups to get it around. Prints can be ordered through the International Workers Order, or from Horizon Films direct, at 232 W. 14 St., N. Y. C.

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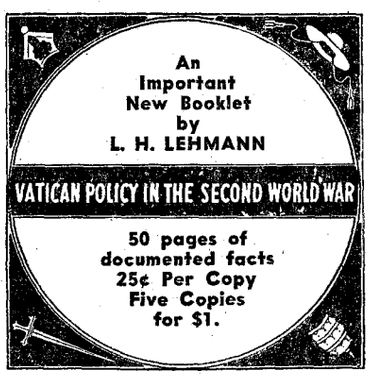

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